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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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SC questions ED on timing of Kejriwal's arrest

SC says life, liberty exceedingly important; seeks ED reply

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

Terming life and liberty as "exceedingly important", Supreme Court on Tuesday questioned the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on the timing of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's arrest. The arrest took place right ahead of the general elections in the excise policy-linked money laundering case.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta, which continued hearing on the Kejriwal's plea challenging his arrest for the consecutive day, posed several queries to Additional Solicitor General SV Raju, appearing for the ED, and sought his reply on Friday.

The bench also flagged the long time gap between initiation of adjudication proceedings in the case and the action of arrest, saying the section 8 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) provides a maximum limit of 365 days. The bench said in this case there are no proceedings of attachments so far and if there are any such proceedings, then the ED will have to show how petitioner (Kejriwal) is connected to it. Justice Khanna said the verdict on the bail plea of former deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia, who is in custody in the excise policy scam case, was divided into two parts – the first part was in favour of Sisodia and the second part was against him.

"You (Raju) have to tell us which part of Sisodia verdict does the petitioner (Kejriwal) case lie," the bench said.

Justice Khanna said the third important question relates to ED's power of arrest as it is the reason why Kejriwal has repeatedly approached the court. It added that what is bothering the court is the time gap between the initiation of proceedings and the repeated complaints being filed because all this have consequences as PMLA provides for a maximum of 365 days.

At the outset, senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for Kejriwal, took the court through the statements of witnesses, approvers and accused in the case and said that only five statements had named the Aam Aadmi Party chief.

He pointed out that ED was initially opposing the bail plea of accused arrested in the case but after they had named the Delhi chief minister, the probe agency chose to not oppose their bail plea. The senior lawyer referred to the 2022 verdict of apex court in Vijay Madanlal Choudhary and 2023 verdict in Pankaj Bansal case and said this court has ruled that the ED is not expected to be vindictive and it must act with the highest degree of fairness. —*PTI*

Arvind Kejriwal arrives to appear before the Rouse Avenue Court in the excise policy-linked money laundering case in New Delhi **PHOTO: PTI**

Sisodia to approach HC over bail

Former Delhi deputy chief minister Manish Sisodia will approach High Court against a city court's Tuesday order, refusing bail to him in the excise policy scam case, AAP said. In a statement, the party said that Sisodia's bail plea was rejected by the Rouse Avenue Court. The court dismissed Sisodia's bail pleas in corruption and money-laundering cases lodged by CBI and ED in alleged irregularities in the formulation and execution of the excise policy of 2021-22.

LABOUR DAY

Workers carry heavy luggage near the City market on the eve of May Day (Labour Day) in Bengaluru on Tuesday. International Labour Day is observed to remember the struggles and sacrifices of the workers and labour movements **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

AstraZeneca admits Covishield can cause blood clots

LONDON, 30 APRIL

UK-headquartered pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca (AZ) has admitted that in "very rare cases" its Covid vaccine can cause a blood clot related side effect but the causal link is unknown, according to court papers being quoted in the UK media.

'The Daily Telegraph' reports that in a legal document submitted to High Court in London in February for a group action being brought by 51 claimants, AZ admitted that the vaccine developed with the University of Oxford to protect against Covid-19 may cause Thrombosis with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome (TTS) in "very rare cases". The AZ Vaxzevria vaccine, also manufactured by the Serum Institute of India (SII), was known in India as Covishield.

Lawyers acting on behalf of the claimants say they, or their loved ones, who received AZ vaccine suffered TTS – a rare syndrome characterised by the concurrence of thrombosis or blood clotting and thrombocytopenia or insufficiency of platelets. The consequences of TTS are potentially life-threatening including strokes, brain damage, heart attacks, pulmonary embolism and amputation. World Health Organisation (WHO) has described the vaccine as "safe and effective for all. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

JD(S) suspends Prajwal over alleged sex scandal

BENGALURU, 30 APRIL

JD(S) on Tuesday suspended its Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna from the party with immediate effect over an alleged sex scandal involving him. The Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the scandal has now issued notices to him and his father and former Minister HD Revanna for questioning. The father and son were asked to appear before the SIT for questioning. Meanwhile the suspension came minutes after the party core committee that met in Hubballi recommended his suspension to former prime minister HD Deve Gowda, who is also Revanna's grandfather. The suspension order, signed by party General Secretary KR Shivakumar, was released to the media following approval from the JD(S) National President. Some explicit video clips involving Prajwal started making the rounds in Hassan. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 2

8-year-old raped in B'luru, police arrests landlord

BENGALURU, 30 APRIL

City police have arrested a house owner for allegedly raping an 8-year-old girl when she was alone at her rented house on Tuesday. According to Madanayakanahalli police inspector, "The accused man had committed the crime when the girl was alone and her parents had gone to work." The survivor has been admitted to the Nelamangala Private Hospital and is being treated. The police have booked the accused under the provision of Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. This is the third case reported in the City. On Friday, a 23-year-old woman was kidnapped and gang-raped. —*Salar News*

BWSSB to produce zero bacteria treated water

BENGALURU, 30 APRIL

Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) has come up with a new Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) that can produce zero bacterial treated water. The plant has the capacity to purify 1 crore litres of water every day, and has been designed to combat the water crisis in the City. The STP has been developed with the help of Indian Institute of Science (IISs) and is said to be a significant breakthrough. Several IT companies, including Wipro and HAL, have already expressed interest in using this water. —*Salar News*

SC appreciates Ramdev's apology, grants relief

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

Supreme Court appreciated the "marked improvement" in the public apology published in newspapers by Ramdev, his aide Balkrishna and Patanjali Ayurved Ltd in the misleading advertisements case.

A bench of Justices Hima Kohli and Ahsanuddin Amanullah told senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, appearing for Ramdev, Balkrishna and Patanjali Ayurved Ltd, on Tuesday that language of the apology was adequate and the names were also there in it.

"I don't know the second apology is on whose vetting," Justice Amanullah said, adding, "We appreciate that. Now finally they have understood."

He said earlier when the apology was published, only the company's name was there.

During the hearing, the apex court asked the firm's counsel as to why they have e-filed the apology published in newspapers when the court had on 23 April specifically asked that the original has to be filed.

"This is not compliance of our order," Justice Kohli observed. The bench noted in its order that the firm's lawyer have conceded that there has been some misunderstanding of the orders passed by the court by his briefing counsel and one more opportunity be given to comply with the order by filing the original page of each newspaper in which the public apology has been published.

"The registry is directed to accept the said document when filed," the bench said and posted the matter for hearing on 7 May.

Rohatgi sought exemption from personal appearance for Ramdev and Balkrishna for the next date of hearing in the matter. —*PTI*

>>>More on Page 4

Ramdev **PHOTO: ANI**

2ND ENCOUNTER IN 15 DAYS

Ch'garh: 9 Naxalites killed in encounter

NARAYANPUR/ RAIPUR, 30 APRIL

Nine Naxalites, including three women, were killed in an encounter with security personnel in a forest along the border of Narayanpur and Kanker districts in Chhattisgarh on Tuesday, state's Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma said.

This is the second major strike on Naxalites by security forces in 15 days.

An AK-47 rifle and a cache of other arms, ammunition and explosives were also seized from the spot, he said, terming the action as a major success.

Sharma congratulated the security personnel for the success. He also appealed to Naxalites to give up arms and join the mainstream.

"The state government led by Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai wants a solution to this issue through talks. If any Naxalite, or a big or small group wants to talk through video call or a mediator, we are ready and will arrange better rehabilitation for them. We urge them to join the mainstream. We want peace to prevail in Bastar and development to take place there," Sharma said.

With this incident, 88 Naxalites have been killed so far this year in separate encounters with security forces in the state's Bastar region, comprising seven districts including Narayanpur and Kanker.

On 16 April, 29 Naxalites were gunned down in an encounter with security forces in Kanker district. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Manipur women stop Army from taking seized arms

IMPHAL, 30 APRIL

Army was stopped from taking away the arms and ammunition they seized in Manipur's Bishnupur district on Tuesday by women-led protestors, officials said. During patrolling in the Kumbi area in the early hours, personnel of the Army's 2 Mahar regiment intercepted two SUVs, they said. A while later, 'Meira Paibis' -- civilian group of Meitei women -- gathered at the spot, and demanded that the weapons be handed over to them, he said. They also demanded that no weapons be confiscated till the conflict, which broke out in May last year, is over. —*PTI*

60% RISE

India ranks 3rd in phishing attacks

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

India ranked as the third-largest country globally for phishing attacks after the US and UK, with its technology sector facing nearly 33 per cent of all such strikes, marking it as the most targeted industry, according to a report.

The report by cybersecurity firm Zscaler showed a 60 per cent rise in global phishing attacks over the past year.

The ThreatLabz 2024 Phishing Report gathered insights from 2 billion blocked phishing transactions between January and December 2023.

The finance and insurance sector has become the prime target for cyber attackers and witnessed the highest number of phishing attempts in 2023, it added. "The finance and insurance sector experienced both the highest number of phishing attempts and the most significant increase in attacks, rising 393 per cent compared to the previous year.

"The increasing reliance on digital financial platforms provides ample opportunities for threat actors to carry out phishing campaigns and exploit vulnerabilities in this sector," the report said.

It was followed by the manufacturing industry, which saw a 31 per cent uptick in phishing attacks between 2022 and 2023. Increasing adoption of AI technology by these sectors makes them even more 'lucrative targets' for phishing schemes, given the increased reliance on data, the report said.

In 2023, phishing scams targeted the United States (55.9 per cent), United Kingdom (5.6 per cent), and India (3.9 per cent) the most. India experienced over 79 million phishing attacks, making it the third most targeted country, it noted. Microsoft emerged as the top imitated enterprise brand in 2023, with Adobe, Amazon, and Google also on the list. Telegram, with 7,92,883 phishing hits, topped the list of most exploited social media platforms worldwide, followed by Facebook (5,32,243 phishing hits) and WhatsApp (3,78,968 phishing hits). While AI makes entities vulnerable to cyber-attacks, it also aids cybercriminals by easing the work for them. —*PTI*

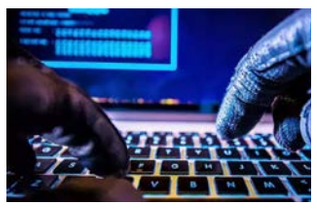


PHOTO: PTI

The water level of Jhelum River rises after rains lashed Jammu and Kashmir for the second consecutive day, in Srinagar **PHOTO: PTI**

4 drown, 1 feared dead after heavy rainfall in Jammu

JAMMU, 30 APRIL

Four people drowned and one is feared dead in separate incidents after they fell into the swollen water bodies after heavy rainfall here, officials said on Tuesday.

The rainfall also triggered landslides at multiple places between Ramban and Banihal along the 270-km Jammu-Srinagar national highway which remained closed for vehicular traffic for the second day, the officials said.

The drowning incidents were reported from Reasi, Ramban, Doda and Jammu districts late Monday evening. While four bodies were fished out by the rescuers, the search for a girl is still on, they said. —*PTI*

SC JUNKS L&T'S PLEA OVER PROJECT IN SHARAVATHI

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

Supreme Court has dismissed a plea by engineering and construction major Larsen & Toubro Ltd challenging the short-term tender floated for the construction of the Rs 8,000-crore Sharavathi pumped storage power project in Karnataka.

A bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra upheld the 25 April order of the Karnataka High Court that had also declined the petition by L&T against the tender by Karnataka Power Corporation Limited (KPCL).

Infrastructure firm Megha Engineering and Infrastructure (MEIL) on Monday said it has bagged the 2,000-megawatt project. —*PTI*

JD(S) suspends Prajwal over alleged sex scandal

The tenure of the suspension is based on the SIT probe report and government action on it, says HDK

BENGALURU, 30 APRIL

JD(S) on Tuesday suspended its Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna from the party with immediate effect over an alleged sex scandal involving him.

The suspension came minutes after the party core committee that met in Hubballi recommended his suspension to its National President and former prime minister HD Deve Gowda, who is also Revanna's grandfather.

"Videos of Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna allegedly harassing women are widely in circulation on media and this has caused huge embarrassment to the party and its leadership," the suspension order said. The suspension order, signed by party General Secretary KR Shivakumar, was released to the media following approval from the JD(S) National President.

JD(S) Chief and MLA GT Devegowda said, "Regarding allegations on Prajwal Revanna, government has constituted an SIT and they have started the investigation; we welcome it. We have decided not to interfere in the process and extend full cooperation to the investigation."The core committee meeting was attended by State JD(S) President HD Kumaraswamy and other members. Kumaraswamy said the tenure of the suspension is based on the SIT probe report and government action on it. "We welcome the SIT probe. If it comes in the report that he is guilty, he will be permanentlsuspended," he added.

Some explicit video clips allegedly involving Prajwal had started making the rounds in Hassan in recent days.

—PTI

Members of NSUI and students of Maharani's College protest against MP Prajwal Revanna and demand his arrest at the college campus in Bengaluru on Tuesday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

NCW seeks report from K'taka police

BENGALURU, 30 APRIL

National Commission for Women (NCW) has sought a report within three days from Karnataka police over allegations of sexual abuse involving Lok Sabha MP Prajwal Revanna. In a letter to Karnataka DGP, the commission urged prompt and decisive action to apprehend the accused, who is reported to have fled the country. It also emphasised the importance of ensuring the safety and dignity of women and preventing the perpetuation of a culture that fosters disrespect and violence against them. "The commission strongly condemns the incident and is deeply disturbed by its occurrence," the letter read. The commission has demanded that a detailed report outlining the measures taken by the police authority concerned be submitted to it within three days.

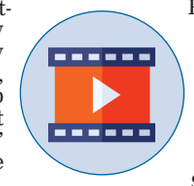
—PTI

Prajwal's driver, BJP leader trade charges over 'leaked' videos

BENGALURU, 30 APRIL

Prajwal Revanna's former car driver Karthik and BJP leader G Devaraje Gowda accused each other of leaking the alleged sleaze videos of the JD(S) Hassan MP which has caused a big embarrassment to the regional party.

In a video message on social media, the driver said he worked with Prajwal for the last 15 years but it has been a year since he has not been with him. "The reason (for distancing from Prajwal) was that my land was taken away and my wife was beaten up. I was mentally tortured. Because my land was taken away, I came out of the job and started my fight (to get back land)," Karthik said in the message.



He said he had approached G Devaraje Gowda for justice as he had been fighting against the Deve Gowda family. Devaraje Gowda had fought the 2023 Assembly election from Holenarasipura assembly constituency on the BJP ticket and lost to Revanna.

In the meantime, Prajwal had brought a stay order to prevent me from releasing any sleaze photos or videos, Karthik said. "Devaraje Gowda told me to hand over the photos and videos which he promised to hand over to the judge to help vacate the stay. Trusting him, I gave him a copy, which he used," the driver claimed.

"Other than Devaraje Gowda, I did not give this video to Congress leaders or anyone else. I did not give the videos and photos to Congress leaders because they were close to Prajwal. Hence, I approached Devaraje Gowda, but he too cheated me," Karthik alleged.

Since BJP and JD(S) have forged an alliance, Karthik said Devaraje Gowda had written to his party high command not to give the ticket to Prajwal pointing to his conduct.

Rejecting the charges, Devaraje Gowda said here that Karthik had been hanging around with the Congress Lok Sabha candidate from Hassan constituency Shreyas Patel. Neither JD(S) nor BJP would release the videos as it would go against the NDA alliance's candidate, he said. "If there was someone benefiting from this, it was Congress. Only for his political gain, the Congress candidate (Shreyas Patel) has mortgaged the modesty of women seen in the videos,.

He said he is waiting for the SIT to serve him a notice where he will release important documents. The BJP leader said the Congress leaders will fall into the ditch they had dug for others. *—PTI*

BJP counter-attacks Cong for delay in action

BENGALURU, 30 APRIL

BJP on Tuesday welcomed JD(S) decision to suspend MP Prajwal Revanna over allegations of sexual abuse, asserting that it will push for the full might of law against him, and launched a fierce counter-attack on Congress for "delayed" action by the Karnataka government.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah and other top BJP leaders questioned Congress government in Karnataka as to why it did not take action against Prajwal when law and order is a state subject.

A day after the Congress tore into the BJP over the allegations against the leader of its ally JD(S) in Karnataka, Shah hit back, asking, "Whose government is there in that State." The issue regarding Revanna reported in the media "is very hurtful and cannot be tolerated in any way", Shah said in Guwahati. The Home Minister said Congress has been alleging that an NDA partner's candidate is involved in the incident.

"The Congress is in power in Karnataka, and this matter must have come to their attention. Why has it not taken any action on it so far? We cannot take any action as law and order is a state issue," Shah said.

In Delhi, Union minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar said BJP has zero tolerance towards crimes against women while accusing the Congress of double standards and being selective on the issue. If the Congress government in Karnataka was aware of the case for weeks and months, then why did it not act so far against the accused, he asked. *—PTI*

JD(S) files plaint against Cong protest

BENGALURU, 30 APRIL

Janata Dal (Secular) lodged a complaint with Commissioner of Police, urging action against Congress workers involved in a protest targeting former prime minister HD Deve Gowda and former chief minister HD Kumaraswamy.

Led by MLC KA Thippeswamy, a delegation including former MLC KT Sreekanthe Gowda and Chowda Reddy approached City Police Commissioner B Dayananda to register their grievance.

Congress workers staged a protest near Congress Bhavan on Race Course Road in Bengaluru on Sunday in connection with a sexual harassment case allegedly involving MP Prajwal Revanna.

—Salar News

PUBLIC DEMANDS JUSTICE

National Youth Congress President Srinivas and other members protest against MP Prajwal Revanna and demand his arrest near the BJP office; Members of Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) protest against Prajwal; Students of Maharani College jump the compound wall to avoid a protest in their campus, in Bengaluru on Tuesday **PHOTOS: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Will request Centre to refer case to CBI: HDK

SHIVAMOGGA, 30 APRIL

Former chief minister HD Kumaraswamy on Tuesday called for a probe by Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) into alleged "obscene video" case linked to JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna.

The JD(S) leader also stated that just three days before the polls, certain Opposition factions, notably some Congress leaders and a BJP leader, collaborated to tarnish Prajwal's image and that of the Deve Gowda family.

Kumaraswamy alleged that this was a desperate attempt by Congress after their campaign failed, and they misused government power to circulate pen drives containing damaging content.

Kumaraswamy said Congress party was manipulating facts to destroy the image of his family. On being asked if Revanna will be expelled from the JD(S) Kumaraswamy said, "We are not going to protect him, we will take severe action but the government's responsibility is more". *—ANI*

11 Cong workers taken into preventive custody

HUBBALLI, 30 APRIL

Eleven Congress workers were taken into preventive custody on Tuesday following an altercation between them and JD(S) cadres here in connection with the alleged sex scandal involving Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna, police said.

The Congress workers staged a protest in front of Denissons Hotel where the core-committee meeting of the JD(S) party was held to recommend the suspension of Prajwal from the party. The JD(S) cadres, who were also present there, raised slogans against the Congress government for allegedly leaking the videos and degrading the dignity of women, police said.

Tense moments prevailed outside the hotel and police had to intervene to bring the situation under control. "Immediately, we made a preventive arrest of the protesters and cleared them from the scene. Around 11 Congress workers were taken into preventive custody and the situation was brought under control," a senior police officer said. *—PTI*

DKS: I don't blackmail with pen drives like HDK

BENGALURU, 30 APRIL

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar has refuted allegations raised by former chief minister Kumaraswamy that he was involved in the circulation of pen drives containing videos of alleged sexual assault by MP Prajwal Revanna. "Revanna himself has admitted the videos were old. I am not intimidated by Kumaraswamy's tactics," Shivakumar said here on Tuesday. "I fight my fights directly and I don't blackmail with pen drives and CDs like Kumaraswamy," Shivakumar said. He said he is concerned over reports of hundreds of women and their families being affected in the sex scandal. It is important to safeguard their identities while ensuring a thorough investigation into the matter, he said. He urged Home Minister Amit Shah to clarify his stance on aligning with parties implicated in such controversies. "If you respect women, respect sisters and mothers, would you like to be a partner with them." *—Salar News*

MP Srinivas Prasad's final rites were conducted at Ambedkar Trust premises following Buddhist rituals in Mysuru on Tuesday **PHOTO: SALAR**

MP Srinivas Prasad cremated in Mysuru

MYSURU, 30 APRIL

MP Srinivas Prasad's final rites were conducted at Ambedkar Trust premises following Buddhist rituals in Mysuru on Tuesday.

Prasad's three daughters, sons-in-law, grandchildren, family members, and thousands of grieving fans attended the ritual. Before the funeral, a final darshan was arranged at NTM School premises in Ashokapuram, where political luminaries including Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, Home Minister G Parameshwar, AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge, BJP State President BY Vijayendra paid their respects to the leader.

—Salar News

NO RAIN IN GARDEN CITY

Bengaluru records driest April in 4 decades

BENGALURU, 30 APRIL

Bengaluru recorded its driest April in 41 years after receiving no significant rainfall for the month; the last occurrence of such a phenomenon was in 1983.

Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) observatory reported the maximum temperatures in the City touching 38 degrees Celsius regularly in the month. According to weather data, Bengaluru typically experiences a maximum daytime temperature of 34°C in April, accompanied by nine hours of sunshine per day. However, this year's dry spell has disrupted the usual weather patterns. There were days with maximum temperatures touching 36-38 degrees Celsius, and minimum temperatures touching 29 degrees Celsius during night. The entire month had seen only three days of rainfall measuring 41 mm.

A woman uses a scarf to protect her child from the scorching sun on a hot summer day, in Bengaluru **PHOTO: PTI**

A Prasad, an IMD scientist told Salar News "The temperature rise was due to the El Nino effect and the absence of rainfall in April is rare, signalling a significant deviation from City's climatic norms. The extreme heatwaves are a cause for concern. If there are rains in the first or second week of May, the temperatures might drop."

Despite these, IMD forecast rain for the southern parts of Karnataka, including Bengaluru, from 1 May. Evening thunderstorms are anticipated although it is scattered. Mandya and Davangere witnessed record-breaking temperatures. Mandya recorded a scorching high of 39.6 degrees Celsius on Tuesday, matching the highest maximum temperature ever recorded for April. Meanwhile, Davangere recorded 40 degrees Celsius on the day, measuring the second-hottest April day ever recorded by the observatory. On tuesday, Mercury rose to 37 degree celsius *—Salar News*

- There were days with maximum temperatures touching 36-38 degrees Celsius, and minimum temperatures touching 29 degrees Celsius

CONG HAS VICIOUS DESIGN, NADDA ON RESERVATION

SHIVAMOGGA, 30 APRIL

Accusing the Congress of supporting the idea of religion-based reservation, even though it cannot be done as per Constitution, BJP President JP Nadda on Tuesday charged the grand old party with having "vicious and divisive designs".

He said this while speaking at a "professionals meet" organised here as part of the BJP's campaign for Shivamogga Lok Sabha candidate BY Raghavendra.

"In the Constitution, it is written that there is no place for religious reservation, but what they (Congress) did -- 4 per cent reservation to Muslims, from OBC quota (in Karnataka). Who is against the OBC? They are neither friends of Muslim brethren nor sympathisers of OBC," Nadda said. *—PTI*

Kejriwal's health is fine, says Punjab CM Mann

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Tuesday met his Delhi counterpart Arvind Kejriwal in Tihar jail and said the AAP supremo asked him to actively campaign for INDIA bloc candidates in the Lok Sabha elections. Mann told reporters that Kejriwal's health is fine, he is getting insulin and undergoing regular check-ups. Delhi chief minister asked people not to worry about him and exercise their franchise during the elections, he said. Mann told reporters that he met Kejriwal the same way he met him the first time. "We were separated by an iron mesh. This could be the height of their hatred. Kejriwal has asked me to tell people not to worry about him and vote. *—PTI*

Cong appoints Yadav as interim chief of Delhi unit

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

Congress on Tuesday appointed former MLA Devender Yadav as interim president of its Delhi unit, two days after Arvinder Singh Lovely resigned from the post while criticising the alliance with AAP and statements of the party's candidates in the national capital. Yadav, who won from the Badli assembly constituency in Delhi in 2008 and 2013 and lost to Ajesh Yadav of AAP in 2015, is currently the All India Congress Committee's (AICC) Punjab in-charge. "My heartfelt thanks to Sh Kharge ji, Smt Sonia Gandhi ji, Rahul Gandhi ji, KC Venugopal ji and Smt Priyanka Gandhi ji and all senior leaders of Congress, for the faith they have bestowed in me yet again!" Yadav said in a post on X. In his resignation letter sent to Congress president on Saturday, Lovely had said that he found himself "handicapped" as all unanimous decisions taken by senior unit leaders were "unilaterally vetoed." *—PTI*

Punjab ex-ADGP Gurinder Singh joins Congress

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

Former Punjab Police additional director general Gurinder Singh Dhillon on Tuesday joined Congress in the presence of senior party leaders in Delhi. Dhillon, who recently opted for voluntary retirement from the Punjab Police, joined the Congress with his wife. He was welcomed into the party fold by Devendra Yadav, AICC's Punjab in-charge. Dhillon said, "I have served my state for about two decades as a police officer. Today, I am here with the blessings of Rahul Gandhi ji." "I met him during my two significant duties Punjab leg of the Bharat Jodo Yatra and when Gandhi ji visited the Golden Temple for 'seva'," he added. Dhillon also expressed his gratitude to Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge, senior leaders KC Venugopal, Yadav. "I am thankful to Congress members in Punjab who have warmly welcomed me. I will perform my duties towards the party in a dedicated manner," he also said. *—PTI*

POCSO among 20 charges against J&K Ind candidate

SRINAGAR, 30 APRIL

Imran Sheikh, an Independent candidate from Jammu and Kashmir's Anantnag-Rajouri Lok Sabha constituency, has 20 cases, including one under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, registered against him over the past nine years. This is the maximum number of cases against any of the 20 contestants from the constituency. According to the affidavit filed by Sheikh along with his nomination papers, the cases are registered in nine different police stations in five districts of the union territory.The first criminal case against Sheikh, who hails from Anantnag district, was registered in 2015 in Pampore police station of Pulwama district. *—PTI*

Guj Cong MLA's aide, AAP leader arrested over fake video of Shah

Investigations are on to nab the person who edited the video

AHMEDABAD, 30 APRIL

The Gujarat police on Tuesday said they have arrested a Congress leader and an AAP functionary for allegedly sharing Union Home Minister Amit Shah's deep fake video, in which he is purportedly seen announcing the curtailment of reservation rights of the SCs, STs and OBCs.

The Ahmedabad Cyber Crime Cell arrested the two people, identified as Satish Vansola, a resident of Palanpur in Banaskantha and Rakesh Baria from Limkheda town of Dahod district, the police said in a release.

A preliminary probe revealed that Vansola has been working as the Personal Assistant (PA) of Congress MLA Jignesh Mevani since the last six years, while Baria has been serving as the AAP's Dahod district president since the last four years, it said.

Vansola, who belongs to the Dalit community, also serves as the general secretary of Banaskantha district Congress.

The duo was booked under section 153A (promoting enmity between different groups) and 505(2) (statements creating or promoting enmity, hatred or ill-will between classes) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

The release said the duo had uploaded the edited video of Amit Shah's speech with an intention to create enmity between reserved castes and unreserved castes in view of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

Cong MLA Jignesh Mevani's close aide, AAP leader held for sharing fake video of Amit Shah **PHOTO: PTI**

"Both of them had shared this edited video of Amit Shah on their Facebook pages. They received this video on their WhatsApp and investigations are still on to nab the person who had edited this video," said Deputy Commissioner of Police, Cyber Crime, Lavina Sinha.

Following Vansola's arrest, Mevani said Dalits from Banaskantha and Patan Lok Sabha seats will keep this in mind during voting.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Monday lodged a complaint with the Election Commission against the Congress, alleging that it circulated a "deep fake and morphed" video of Amit Shah to derail the poll process, and demanded strict action against the party. *—PTI*

Fake videos being sold in 'mohabbat ki dukaan', says Modi

Dharashiv, 30 April

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said rivals who are unable to take on the BJP-led government are misusing technology to circulate fake videos on social media. "Now their condition is such that as their lies aren't working, they are using my face and with the help of artificial intelligence, selling fake videos in their "mohabbat ki dukaan". This shop of lies must be shut down," Modi said."Opponents are using artificial intelligence to distort quotes of leaders like me," Modi said, addressing an election rally in Dharashiv district of Maharashtra.

The ongoing Lok Sabha elections are about the country's self-respect, Modi said. "Will a weak government, which can collapse any moment, build a strong nation," he asked. *—PTI*

FIGHT OF IDEOLOGIES

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi addresses a public meeting for Lok Sabha elections, in Bhind, Madhya Pradesh on Tuesday **PHOTO: PTI**

BJP will throw away Constitution if it wins: Rahul

BHIND, 30 APRIL

Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday claimed that if the BJP returns to power at the Centre, it will "tear apart" and "throw away" the Constitution which granted rights to the poor, Dalits, STs and the OBCs.

Addressing a rally in Madhya Pradesh's Bhind district, Gandhi, while holding a copy of the Constitution (book), said the ongoing Lok Sabha poll is not a normal election, but a fight between two ideologies.

"The poor, STs, OBCs got several rights because of the Constitution which also gave the people MGNREGA, land rights, reservation, and other things. If the BJP comes to power, it will throw away and tear apart this Constitution," he claimed.

If the ruling dispensation is not against reservation, then why it is privatising PSUs, the Railways and other sectors, he asked.

Gandhi also said that if the Congress comes to power, it will make crores of women "lakhpati" through its Mahalaksmi Yojana.

Under the scheme, the government will transfer Rs 1 lakh (Rs 8,500 per month) into the accounts of the women to make them "lakhpati", he said.

"If Prime Minister Narendra Modi can turn 22-25 industrialists into billionaires, then the Congress will turn crores of women into lakhpatis," Gandhi said.

The Congress has fielded MLA Phool Singh Baraiya from the Bhind Lok Sabha (SC-reserved) seat against BJP's sitting MP Sandhya Rai. *—PTI*

BLAME GAME

TMC workers heckled me: Sandeshkhali protester

KOLKATA, 30 APRIL

West Bengal's Basirhat Lok Sabha seat BJP candidate Rekha Patra, who is the face of Sandeshkhali protests, on Tuesday alleged that she was heckled by TMC workers during campaigning.

Trinamool Congress, on the other hand, dismissed the allegations and charged BJP with assaulting supporters of the ruling party in the state.

The alleged incident took place in the afternoon when BJP activists were campaigning in Kharidanga panchayat area in Basirhat Lok Sabha seat, of which Sandeshkhali is also a part.

"When we were campaigning when all of a sudden, TMC activists attacked us. They pushed me and hit other party workers," Patra told reporters.

BJP IT cell chief and co-incharge of West Bengal, Amit Malviya, alleged that the incident reflects desperation of TMC.

"The desperation of TMC after scoring ducks in the first 2 phases, knows no bounds. After being exposed in the Supreme Court, for protecting Sheikh Shahjahan, instead of victims of #Sandeshkhali, TMC Kharidanga Panchayat Pradhan Samir Bachar along with Civic Volunteer (contractual police of Bengal) Bablu Bachar, hit Rekha Patra, face of Sandeshkhali protests and BJP candidate from Basirhat, with sticks while she was campaigning," he posted on X.

BJP candidate Rekha Patra **PHOTO: PTI**

"Mamata Banerjee should be ashamed of her crass misogynistic politics. @NCWIndia and @India_NHRC must take cognizance of the diminishing civil and political liberties in West Bengal. BJP hit the street in protest," Malviya added.

Sandeshkhali TMC MLA Sukumar Mahata dubbed the allegations as baseless, alleging, "It was the BJP activists who beat up TMC workers. They want to vitiate the atmosphere of the area before elections." *—PTI*

A voter turnout of 81.16 per cent was recorded at six polling stations in Outer Manipur **PHOTO: PTI**

Outer Manipur repoll sees 81.16 pc voter turnout

IMPHAL, 30 APRIL

A voter turnout of 81.16 per cent was recorded at six polling stations in Outer Manipur Lok Sabha seat, where repolling was held on Tuesday, election officials said.

No untoward incident was reported and voting, which commenced at 7 am, was held peacefully under tight security arrangements, they said.

A voter turnout of 81.16 per cent was recorded till the end of polling at 4 pm, the officials said.

Repolling was necessitated as unidentified persons had damaged EVMs and VVPATs before the completion of voting at four of these six polling stations on 26 April, while EVM malfunctioning was reported at one polling station, and voting could not be completed at another due to "threat and intimidation by unknown miscreants", they said.

Voting at four polling stations in Ukhrul assembly segment, and one each in Chingai assembly seat in Ukhrul and Karong in Senapati was declared null and void, a notification issued by the office of Manipur's chief electoral officer had earlier said.

Five of the polling stations are in Ukhrul district and have a total of 4,156 voters.

Around 76.06 per cent of 4.84 lakh voters exercised their franchise during polling in 13 of 28 assembly segments of Outer Manipur Lok Sabha constituency on April 26. Voting was held in the remaining 15 segments, along with the entire Inner Manipur Lok Sabha seat, in the first phase on 19 April. PTI *—PTI*

MODI REMOTELY CONTROLLING JAGAN: SHARMILA

RAVULAPALEM, 30 APRIL

Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee President YS Sharmila on Tuesday alleged that YSRCP Chief and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy is playing to the tunes of Prime Minister Narendra Modi which is akin to being operated through a remote control.

Sharmila made this assertion against Jagan, her elder brother, at Ravulapalem in Konaseema district as part of her electioneering tour across the state.

When riots happened in Manipur, Modi muted the remote control to make Jagan Mohan Reddy go silent, she said.

She made these remarks to rebut Jagan's recent claims that the Congress has become a remote control in the hands of TDP supremo N Chandrababu Naidu.

Sharmila, who is contesting from the Kadapa Lok Sabha constituency highlighted that she is fighting the election only because the YSRCP chief has fielded her cousin YS Avinash Reddy from the same constituency. *—PTI*

Cong Indore candidate withdrew over 'threats'

SHIVPURI, 30 APRIL

Congress' Indore Lok Sabha candidate Akshay Bam was "threatened and tortured" following which he withdraw his nomination, the Opposition party's Madhya Pradesh chief Jitu Patwari has claimed while targeting BJP.

Bam withdrew his nomination on Monday, which was the last day for the process.

"Three days ago, IPC section 307 (attempt to murder) was added to an old case against Bam. He was threatened. He was tortured in different ways for the whole night. And today he has withdrawn his nomination," Patwari alleged at a rally on Monday.

Akshay Bam **PHOTO: PTI**

Bam, his father Kantilal and others are accused in a case that was registered in October 2007.

On 5 April the victim filed an application in the court of the judicial magistrate first class seeking section 307 after alleging that an accused had fired on him. *—ANI*

Will remember one-sided action: SP man

SAMBHAL, 30 APRIL

The Samajwadi Party's Sambhal candidate has said he will remember the "unilateral action" after a case was registered against him for alleged inflammatory statements, and alleged that Prime Minister Naredra Modi is speaking in a language not spoken by even ministers and MLAs.

Ziaur Rehman Barq was on Monday booked for allegedly making inflammatory statements regarding gangster-politicians Atiq Ahmad and Mukhtar Ansari, officials said.Ahmad was gunned down in police custody in Prayagraj last year while Ansari died of cardiac arrest in a hospital in Banda last month.Speaking in the Sarai Tareen town late on Monday, Barq said, "I want to ask the Election Commission, police and administration officials, nothing is done if BJP leaders violate the model code of conduct but cases are lodged against us even if we say the right thing." *—PTI*

Ziaur Rehman Barq **PHOTO: PTI**

CASTE ARITHMETIC

Caste still a major factor in selection of candidates in Guj

AHMEDABAD, 30 APRIL

Political parties may claim that the caste arithmetic does not play a role in candidate selection but analysts say it is still a major factor in Gujarat, even though urbanisation has weakened caste identities in some parts of the state.

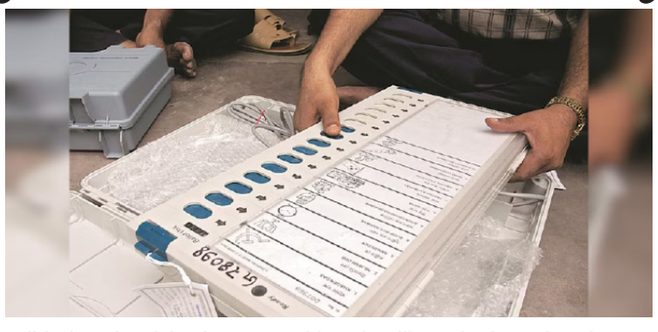
In rural areas, however, caste is still a dominant factor, they said.

Patidars constitute 11-12 per cent of Gujarat's 6.5-crore population and Other Backward Classes (OBCs), scattered across many sub-communities including Thakors in north and Kolis in central Gujarat and Saurashtra, constitute around 40 per cent.

BJP has fielded six Patidars, seven OBCs and three Kolis. Congress and AAP, part of the Opposition INDIA alliance, have fielded six Patidars, seven OBCs and two Kolis.

Vidyut Joshi, sociologist and former vice-chancellor of Bhavnagar University, told PTI that Gujarat's first four chief ministers were either Brahmin or Vanik.

"Caste is an identity. The caste factor is considered in the selection of candidates. It cannot be discarded. Today, caste and class go hand-in-hand. The candidate should be from a well-to-do background along with being from a specific caste," Joshi said.



Political parties claim that caste arithmetic still a major factor in Gujarat **PHOTO: PTI**

Political analyst Amit Dholakia said the caste effect is diminishing in central and south Gujarat's urban pockets like Ahmedabad and Vadodara but it is still a dominant factor in rural areas like Saurashtra and north Gujarat.

Rajkot-based political analyst Jagdish Mehta said in Saurashtra and Kutch regions, having eight Lok Sabha seats, caste was not a dominant factor before the 1990s.

State Congress spokesperson Manish Doshi said the onus is also on the voters because if they keep rejecting well-qualified and deserving candidates, parties will shift focus to other selection criteria like caste as ultimately victory matters.

"Ultimately, our selection is based on the choice of voters. We have seen in the past how candidates like TN Seshan lost, some struggled to save deposits, and how non-corrupt and upright former government officers lost polls. This creates pressure on parties to look for winnability, not quality of candidates," said Doshi.

In the 1999 Lok Sabha polls, Congress nominee and former chief election commissioner Seshan, credited with transforming the Election Commission in the 1990s, lost to BJP veteran LK Advani from Gandhinagar Lok Sabha seat. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Admiral Dinesh Tripathi becomes new Naval Chief

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

Admiral Dinesh Kumar Tripathi, who is a communication and electronic warfare specialist, on Tuesday assumed charge as the 26th Navy chief after incumbent R Hari Kumar retired from service.An alumnus of the Sainik School Rewa, Admiral Tripathi was serving as the Vice Chief of the Naval Staff before taking the reins of the force.A communication and electronic warfare specialist, he has had a long and distinguished service spanning nearly 39 years. Prior to taking over as Vice Chief of Navy, he had served as Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Western Naval Command.Admiral Tripathi has commanded Indian Naval Ships Vinash, Kirch and Trishul.—*PTI*

R'than: 19-yr-old beaten to death by relative

KOTA, 30 APRIL

A 19-year-old youth was allegedly hammered to death by his relative during a drunken brawl over a monetary dispute in a town in Rajasthan's Jhalawar district, police said on Tuesday. The incident took place under the Bhawani Mandi police station limits of the Jhalawar on the intervening night of Monday and Tuesday, they added.The accused has been detained for interrogation and the body was handed over to his family after postmortem on Tuesday morning, Ramesh Chand Meena, SHO at Bhawani Mandi police station, said. The victim Rahul Bheel and his relative Rakesh Bheel,20, used to together run a sugarcane juice stall, the police said. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Bhojpuri actress Amrita Pandey found dead

BHAGALPUR, 30 APRIL

Bhojpuri actress Annapurna, popularly known as Amrita Pandey, was found dead under mysterious circumstances at her residence in Bihar's Bhagalpur district, a senior police officer said on Tuesday. The actress was found dead at Divyadharma Apartment in Adampur Ship Ghat here on 27 April.It is suspected that the 27-year-old actress might have committed suicide as hours before her death, she had reportedly posted a cryptic note on her WhatsApp status. However, cops have not recovered any suicide note. —*PTI*

Five of a family killed in car-lorry collision in Kerala

KANNUR, 30 APRIL

Five members of a family, including a child, were killed after their car collided with a lorry in Kerala's Kannur on Monday night, police said. The deceased were identified as KN Padmakumar,59, resident of Kalichanadukkam, Choorikkatt Sudhakaran,52, resident of Bheemanadi, Ajitha,35, Kozhummal Krishnan,65, and Akash,9. According to the police, the accident occurred around 10.15pm on Monday in the Kannapuram area in Kannur when the family of five was travelling from Thalassery to Kasaragod. The lorry carrying gas cylinders was coming from Karnataka's Mangaluru.The police said that four people in the car died on the spot while the nine-year-old's death was confirmed at the Pariyaram Medical College Hospital later. The lorry driver also sustained injuries he added. Sudhakaran and family were returning after dropping his son at a hostel.—*PTI*

Naked parade in Manipur: Cops handed women to mob

One of the victims was the wife of a Kargil war veteran

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

The Manipur Police personnel allegedly drove the two women from the Kuki-Zomi community, who had sought refuge in their official gypsy, to a mob of around 1,000 Meiti rioters in Kangpokpi district, the CBI charge sheet has said.

The two women were subsequently stripped naked and paraded before being sexually assaulted during the ethnic violence in the state, the charge sheet added.

The women, one of whom was the wife of a Kargil war veteran, desperately asked the police personnel to drive them to a safe location but were allegedly told by them that "there was no key" (of the vehicle) and did not provide any help, the officials giving details of the charge sheet said.

A video showing two women being paraded naked surrounded by a mob of men went viral last year in July, nearly two months after the ethnic violence broke on 4 May .

The CBI filed its charge sheet against six accused and a report against one Child in Conflict with the Law (CCL) before the Special Judge, CBI Court at Guwahati on 16 October last year. It has alleged that the two women were running away from a mob of around 900-1,000 persons carrying sophisticated weapons like AK rifles, SLR, INSAS and .303 rifles.

Manipur cop allegedly drove the two women from the Kuki-Zomi community, who had sought refuge in their official gypsy PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

The mob had forcefully entered their village in Kangpokpi district, about 68km south of Saikul police station, it said. The women, along with other victims, ran into the forest to escape from the mob but were spotted by the rioters who had separated the victims. Some members of the mob told the women to reach the police vehicle parked on the roadside to seek help, officials in the know of the development said.

The two women managed to get inside the vehicle, in which two police personnel and the driver were sitting. Three to four personnel were outside the vehicle.

One of the male victims, who also managed to make his way inside the vehicle, kept pleading with the driver to drive them to a safe place but was told "there was no key".

The husband of one of the victims had served the Indian Army.

The police also did not help the father of the man sitting in the vehicle from being assaulted by the mob, the CBI alleged.

Later, the driver of the police gypsy drove the vehicle towards a mob of around 1,000 people and stopped it in front of them.

The victims desperately asked the police personnel to drive them to safety, but no help was provided to them.

The mob had already killed the father of one of the male victims who was sitting in the gypsy along with the two women, the agency has said.

The violent mob came towards the gypsy when the police personnel fled from the scene, leaving the victims at the mercy of the crowd.

The accused have been charged under various sections of the Indian Penal Code, including those pertaining to gang rape, murder, outraging the modesty of a woman and criminal conspiracy, the CBI has said. —*PTI*

MEA SLAMS US REPORT OVER PANNUN CASE

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

A day after The Washington Post named an Indian official for allegedly plotting to eliminate Sikh extremist Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, India on Tuesday said the report made "unwarranted and unsubstantiated" imputations on a serious matter.

The newspaper, citing unnamed sources, named a RAW officer in connection with the alleged plot to assassinate Pannun.

"The report in question makes unwarranted and unsubstantiated imputations on a serious matter," External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.

"There is an on-going investigation of the high level committee set up by the Government of India to look into the security concerns shared by the US government on networks of organised criminals, terrorists and others," he said.

Jaiswal was responding to media queries on the report.

"Speculative and irresponsible comments on it are not helpful," Jaiswal said.

PHOTO: PTI

In November last year, US federal prosecutors charged Indian national Nikhil Gupta with working with an Indian government employee in the foiled plot to kill Pannun, a Sikh extremist on American soil.

Pannun, wanted in India on terror charges, holds dual citizenship of the US and Canada.

On 7 December, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said in Parliament that India instituted an inquiry committee to look into the inputs received from the US in the case as the matter has a bearing on national security.

—*PTI*

MERCURY SOARS

2 dead amid heat wave in Kerala; govt urges people to save power

T'PURAM, 30 APRIL

Amid the rising heat, atleast two people were dead in India's southern state Kerala due to heat stroke. Many places in the state have been issued red alert for heat wave by the IMD.

A 90-yr-old woman and a 50-year-old man died in the state on Sunday. The temperatures rose as high as 41.9 degrees

Cutting on power consumption

As Kerala has been experiencing relentless heat for the past few weeks, power consumption in the state has shot up considerably, prompting the state government to urge residents to exercise control when using electricity.

Kerala Electricity Minister K Krishnankutty said on Tuesday that power cuts are occurring more often at night in the state due to technical issues arising in the substations as a result of the increased consumption.

As the temperatures in the state rise, the power consumption is also increasing as people use ACs for longer durations PHOTO: PIXABAY

As the temperatures in the state rise, the power consumption is also increasing as people use air conditioners for longer durations, the minister said, adding that as a result, the substations get overloaded and the electricity supply trips as a safety measure.

"If people exercise some restraint and control in their power consumption by limiting the hours of AC use, etc., then overloads can be prevented. Yesterday, on 29 April, the electricity consumption was 113.14 million units (MU). It ideally should have been less than 100," the minister told a TV channel.

He also said that if people exercise restraint, then there will be no need for the Kerala State Electricity Board (KSEB) to go for load shedding. —*PTI*

17-yr-old pregnant after raped, parents booked

PALGHAR, 30 APRIL

A 17-year-old girl from Maharashtra's Palghar district was allegedly raped by two people on different occasions under the pretext of marriage following which she became pregnant and had two children, police said on Tuesday.

Based on the girl's complaint, the police on Sunday registered a case against 16 people, including the two alleged rapists, the victim's parents and two doctors, on various charges, they said.

Some persons have also been detained, the police said without giving more details.

According to the complaint filed by the girl, who is a resident of Nallasopara area, two persons lured her since 2021 on the promise of marriage and allegedly raped her repeatedly on separate occasions, an official from Achole police station said.

The girl became pregnant and had two children, he said, adding that both the people later abandoned the victim and the children.

PHOTO: PIXABAY

One of the alleged rapists took the victim to Amravati when she was pregnant, concealed her identity and got her delivery done at a hospital there before abandoning her and the child, the official said.

Eight of the accused, including the girl's parents and uncle, took Rs 4 lakh from one of the alleged rapists through an acquaintance and handed over the victim's girl child to a person for sale, he said.

The accused in the case also include two women doctors of hospitals where the victim delivered the children and an advocate, whose role is not specified in the FIR.

—*PTI*

MAN RAPES TEEN FOR 3 MONTHS IN HIMACHAL

BALLIA, 30 APRIL

A man allegedly kidnapped a 15-year-old girl from a village here and took her to Himachal Pradesh where he raped her for almost three months, police said on Tuesday.

The police rescued the teenager on Monday and arrested the 26-year-old accused after he returned to Ballia with the girl, they said.

The accused, who hails from Nepal's Parsa district and worked in Himachal Pradesh, had befriended the girl on social media, the police said.

The minor went missing on 29 January and on the basis of her mother's complaint, a case was registered against unknown people underSection 363 (kidnapping) of the Indian Penal Code, they said. Superintendent of Police (SP) Dev Ranjan Verma said the police rescued the girl from the accused on Monday.Yadav allegedly abducted the girl and took her to Himachal Pradesh where he raped her for three months, the SP said. —*PTI*

Tiger that killed 6 people finally captured

A nine-year-old tiger that had killed six people in Chandrapur district of Maharashtra in the last two months has been caged PHOTO: PIXABAY

CHANDRAPUR, 30 APRIL

A nine-year-old tiger that had killed six people in Chandrapur district of Maharashtra in the last two months has been caged, marking the successful culmination of a two-month-long operation to capture the elusive big cat on the prowl which had struck terror in villages.

The tiger which managed to throw foresters off his trail with his sharp animal instincts finally took the bait placed inside a cage on Monday night in the Karva-Ballarpur forest area, a senior official said on Tuesday.

The tiger had killed four people in the Central Chanda division and two others in the Chandrapur division in the last two months, the official added.

She said the operation to capture the tiger was going on continuously for the last two months.

"As the tiger was more cautious, it became difficult to capture him. The team initially faced a tough time, but with persistence and patience, the forest department succeeded in the operation by caging the tiger on Monday night in the Karva-Ballarpur forest area," said Boddu.

The caging of the troublesome tiger before the start of the Tendu leaf collection season came as a huge relief for forest department personnel and villagers in the central Chanda division.

"Further action about the tiger will be taken on directions from senior officials," the DCF said. Another official said troublesome tigers are generally shifted to a zoo in Nagpur and not released in the wild again. —*PTI*

INDIA BURNING

Tourists quench their thirst as they visit the Taj Mahal on a hot summer day, in Agra. The city recorded temperature of 38°Con Tuesday PHOTO: PTI

Ammonia gas leak triggers panic in Coimbatore

COIMBATORE, 30 APRIL

- The unit exporting chips and french fries was sold recently and the gas leak could have occurred during renovation

Ammonia gas leak at a defunct chips manufacturing unit in Chenniveerampalayam village near Karamadai here triggered a panic leading authorities to evacuate about 250 families from the locality as a precaution, said police on Tuesday.

The leakage from a cold storage unit for potatoes in the export factory closed four years ago caused ammonia to dissipate into the air around midnight of 29 April leading to some villagers complaining of eye irrigation.

"Immediately, the police evacuated the families to a safe place and lodged them temporarily in a marriage hall as a precaution," a senior police official said.

The unit exporting chips and french fries was sold recently and the gas leak could have occurred during renovation, he added.

Police and fire service personnel who rushed to the unit shut the valve of a tank and contained further damage.

—*PTI*

AMID HEAT

U'khand reports 47 more forest fires

DEHRADUN, 30 APRIL

The forest fires continued to rage in Uttarakhand on Monday with the hill state reporting 47 forest blazes in the last 24 hours in which 48.7825 hectares of forest land were gutted.

The Kumaon region reported majority of the forest fire incidents, Additional Chief Conservator of Forest Nishant Verma said.

Since November last year, 653 forest fire incidents have been recorded in the state in which 814.0975 hectares of forest land have been destroyed, Verma said.

A man was arrested from Gularjhara beat of Lansdowne forest division for trying to ignite a fire in the forests, he said.

Since last year, 653 forest fire incidents have been recorded in the state in which 814.0975 hectares of land have been destroyed PHOTO: PTI

- The forest fires continued to rage in Uttarakhand on Monday with the hill state reporting 47 forest blazes in the last 24 hours in which 48.7825 hectares of forest land were gutted

Verma said the local women came forwardo douse a forest fire that had started in the forests of Baunsadi village of Lambgaon in Tehri district.

The fire was extinguished before it could spread and more than 90 per cent of the forests were saved, he said.

—*PTI*

LABOUR DAY EVE

Labourers work at a brick factory on the eve of Labour Day, in Patna, on Tuesday
PHOTO: PTI

India among top 4 to release microplastics into waterbodies

India will release 391,879 tonnes of microplastics and will be the second leading polluter of the waterbodies after China ***PHOTO: UNSPLASH***

As many as 217 countries will release 3,153,813 tonnes of microplastics into the world's waterways by the end of 2024, according to a new report.

China, India, the United States and Japan will account for 51 per cent of this volume, according to the 2024 Plastic Overshoot Day (POD) Report. India will release 391,879 tonnes of microplastics and will be the second leading polluter of the waterbodies after China (787,069 tonnes) in the world, the analysis by Swiss non-profit EA Earth Action showed.

The term 'microplastics' refers to plastic particles that are no larger than 5 millimetres. The release of primary microplastics from sources such as tyre abrasion, shedding of textile fibres, pellets production and paint pollute the environment, along with improper waste disposal, the researchers flagged in the report.

The chemical additives in the microplastics accumulate in waterbodies and have serious impacts on human health. "Common additives released from microplastics include heavy metals, polyamidoamine-epichlorohydrins, bisphenol A, brominated flame retardants and per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances," showed a research paper published in the journal Environmental Pollution earlier this year.

Light, temperature and presence of other pollutants affect the release of these chemicals, which pile up and cause toxicity in bodies of animals that ingest them.

"Some additives cause neurotoxicity, inflammation, metabolic disorders and cancer," the report mentioned.

In 2024, at least 291,071 tonnes of chemical additives will be discharged into the waterbodies, according to the POD report. Of this, 40 per cent will come from four nations — China, India, the Russian Federation and Brazil, the scientists wrote.

India will release 31,483 tonnes of chemical additives from microplastics and will be the second leading polluter of waterways through this method after China (59,208 tonnes), according to the authors.

The microplastics concentration in Ganga, which forms India's largest river basin, was found to be more than any other major world river, revealed a study in 2021.

In 2023, India's Central Pollution Control Board acknowledged the presence of microplastics in its waterbodies, in a report submitted to the National Green Tribunal.

Although the health effects of chemical additives have been acknowledged, India is attempting to reimagine the 'life cycle of plastic' at the fourth session of the Intergovernment Negotiating Committee (INC-4), a conference where countries gathered to discuss the creation of a legally enforceable international plastics treaty.

"Each Party shall promote scientific and technical innovation to prevent the release of plastic into waterways and marine environment," according to the revised draft of the treaty.

India, classified as the low waste-producing polluters, must focus on developing the domestic waste management infrastructure and invest in waste management programmes, including extended producer responsibility (EPR), recommended the 2024 POD report released ahead of INC-4.

At INC-4, India reiterated its stance that EPR mechanisms should remain within national boundaries and not encompass international supply chains, wrote Siddharth Ghanshyam Singh, programme manager, environmental governance and solid waste management, the Centre for Science and Environment.

The determination of the scope and modalities of EPR should be left to the discretion of each member state. While acknowledging chemicals used in plastic manufacturing, India stated that some are already subject to prohibition or regulation under different conventions.

Decisions regarding chemicals should be grounded in a transparent and inclusive process informed by scientific evidence, said India at the meeting on the global plastics treaty being held at Ottawa.

Global plastics waste management has somewhat improved, but plastic waste generation has risen by 7.11 per cent since 2021, the new POD report indicated.

The world is estimated to have generated 220 million tonnes of plastic waste this year, the reasearchers noted. This means that the improvements in waste management capacity are outpaced by rising plastic production.

So, the assumption that recycling and waste management capacity will solve the plastics crisis is flawed.

—Courtesy Downtoearth

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR سالار

What's behind a dramatic fall in families' savings?

For decades, India has been a nation of savers. They stash away a significant portion of their earnings for future security, often at the expense of current consumption.

But something seems to be amiss now. Recent data from the Reserve Bank of India says India's net household savings stood at a 47-year-old low.

Household net savings are the total money and investments families have, like deposits, stocks and bonus, minus any money they owe, like loans and debt.

Savings shrank to 5.3% of the gross domestic product (GDP) in the financial year 2023, down from 7.3% in 2022. One economist called this fall "dramatic".

There has also been a sharp jump in household debt in the same period. Annual borrowings stood at 5.8% of GDP - the second-highest level after the 1970s.

As households increasingly rely on debt to fuel consumption, their savings inevitably erode. The more they borrow, they dedicate more of their income to repaying debt, leaving less for savings.

Nikhil Gupta, economist at Motilal Oswal Financial Services, says a significant portion of India's increasing household debt is made up of non-mortgage loans. Farm and business loans comprise over half of these loans. (An interesting aside: In 2022, non-mortgage debt in India matched Australia and Japan, and surpassed many other major nations, including the US and China.) Gupta also found that while borrowing for consumption - credit cards, consumer durables, weddings, health emergencies, for example - makes up less than 20% of total household debt, it was the fastest-growing segment.

So what does this trend of low savings and high debt tell us about India's economy, the fifth largest in the world? Do increased borrowing and spending point to optimism for the future, or do they warn of challenges such as declining incomes, inflation and economic stress?

What about borrowing money out of necessity or desperation, typically during times of financial hardship or crisis? Extended distress borrowing could easily lead to loan defaults. On the other hand, if the lenders are doing their homework, why would they continue to lend to non-creditworthy borrowers in the throes of a financial crisis?

A key problem, according to Mr Gupta, is the lack of granular detail in the official data on the borrowers. What kind of jobs they do? How many people have taken how many loans? (One borrower can take multiple loans.) What are they using the loans for? What is their repayment history?

Some clues are available. Gupta and fellow economist Tanisha Ladha at Motilal Oswal have found that the bulk of household debt growth in the past decade was driven by 'credit widening' - an increase in the number of borrowers - rather than 'credit deepening' or higher loans per borrower. Having more people borrowing is preferable to having each borrower take out larger loans.

They also found that Indian households have a debt service ratio (DSR) - the share of income used to service loans - of approximately 12%, similar to Nordic countries.

This ratio is higher than that of China, France, the UK, and the US, all of which have higher household debt levels. The difference is due to higher interest rates and shorter loan tenures in India, resulting in a relatively higher DSR despite lower debt-to-income ratios.

In September, India's finance ministry dismissed fears about reducing savings and increasing borrowings, saying people were taking advantage of low interest rates after the pandemic to buy cars, education loans and homes.

Also, it said, more people were borrowing to buy assets like home and vehicles which is "not a sign of distress but of confidence in the future employment and income prospects".

—BBC News

India's net household savings stood at a 47-year-old low, according to RBI ***PHOTO: UNSPLASH***

Natural disasters overlooked in Himachal Pradesh poll campaigns

No candidate has presented a clear vision for addressing environmental issues yet ***PHOTO: DOWNTOEARTH***

LOK SABHA POLLS 2024

The impact of environmental changes is starkly visible in Himachal Pradesh, located in the Himalayan foothills, as evidenced by recurring natural disasters. However, these issues are not being addressed sufficiently in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Himachal Pradesh will hold general elections in four Lok Sabha constituencies as well as by-elections in six assembly constituencies. On 1 June, approximately 5.57 million voters will vote at 7,990 polling stations during the final phase of the Lok Sabha elections.

It has been more than a month since the elections were announced and all political parties are actively campaigning. However, no candidate has presented a clear vision or plan for addressing environmental and climate change issues.

Kulbhushan Upmanyu, a former associate of Sunderlal Bahuguna in the Chipko Movement and president of Himalaya Niti Abhiyan, said that including environmental issues in manifestos appears to be a mere formality for the political parties. "Environmental concerns are not just about the Himalayas and their surrounding states, but are of national significance," he said.

Upmanyu noted that policymakers should be alerted by the natural disasters that have recently occurred in Himachal, Uttarakhand and Jammu & Kashmir. "Despite this, candidates and prominent party campaigners remain silent on environmental issues, which is concerning," he said.

Environment played a crucial role in the 2021 by-elections for the Mandi Lok Sabha seat in Himachal Pradesh.

Youth from the Kinnaur region launched a 'No Means No' campaign against dams and hydropower projects, urging voters to press the 'none of the above' or NOTA button in the elections. This movement likely contributed to the ruling party candidate's defeat by 6,000 votes, with 12,926 voters opting for NOTA.

The youth opposing large-scale power projects in the Himalayan region, particularly in Kinnaur, have decided to raise questions about environmental issues again in the current elections. This time, Kinnaur's youth launched a 'No Means No' campaign to raise awareness about environmental issues.

Sunder Singh Negi, a youth involved in the campaign, said they plan to question party candidates and campaigners on their stance towards the environment in the eco-sensitive region and seek information on their roadmap for sustainable development.

Suresh Kashyap, BJP candidate from Shimla Lok Sabha seat, stated his party is aware of environmental issues and has included them in its manifesto. The party has previously expressed its views on environmental assessments in Himachal at various forums and will continue to do so in the future, Kashyap claimed.

Following an extended dry spell, Himachal Pradesh received significant snowfall and rain over the last four days in March 2024. From 1 to 3 March, 2024, tribal districts Kinnaur, Lahaul, and Spiti received more than three feet of snow, posing significant challenges for local residents.

Last year, a massive natural disaster in Himachal caused property damage worth Rs 10,000 crore and claimed 391 lives. Approximately 12,000 buildings were damaged, with hundreds of thousands of hectares of land affected.

In July 2023, Lahaul-Spiti's cold desert received one-third of its seasonal rainfall in a single day.

The deluge in north India in July 2023 also prompted experts to question Himachal Pradesh's development model, as the majority of the destruction was found to have occurred in areas with development projects.

Over 30 flash flood incidents and seven cloudbursts have battered Himachal within a month of the onset of monsoon 2022.

Raman Kant, a young voter from the Mandi Lok Sabha constituency, told DTE that natural disasters have increased significantly in their area over the past few years. "The time has come for environment and development to progress together," he said, adding that he plans to vote based on the development models proposed by the parties and candidates this year.

Vikramaditya Singh, the Congress candidate from the Mandi Lok Sabha seat and current public works minister in Himachal Pradesh, said his party supported the people of Himachal during the recent disaster by releasing a special relief package worth Rs 4,500 crore.

Despite these promises, the emphasis on environmental issues is absent from party campaigns, rallies, and speeches. *—Courtesy Downtoearth*

ICJ rules it will not halt Germany arms to Israel

Nicaragua claims Germany violates 1948 Genocide Convention by supplying Israel with weapons and aid

Nicaragua's case is the latest legal bid by a country with historic ties to the Palestinian people to stop Israel's offensive
PHOTO: X/@ALARABIYA_ENG

THE HAGUE, 30 APRIL

The top United Nations court rejected Tuesday a request by Nicaragua to order Germany to halt military and other aid to Israel and renew funding to the UN aid agency in Gaza.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) said that legal conditions for making such an order weren't met.

Germany argued at hearings in the case that it has barely exported any weapons to Israel since the assault against Gaza.

Earlier, the president of the top United Nations court opened the hearing Tuesday to deliver judges' decision on a request by Nicaragua.

Nicaragua, a longstanding ally of the Palestinians, had alleged that Germany is enabling genocide by sending arms and other support to Israel.

Tuesday's ruling by the International Court of Justice is only about preliminary orders in the case that will likely take years to resolve. Germany has rejected the allegations.

Israel, which isn't a party to the case between Nicaragua and Germany, strongly denies that its assault on Gaza amounts to acts of genocide, and insists that it's acting in self-defense.

Late last year, South Africa accused Israel of genocide at the court.

The cases come as Israel's allies face growing calls to stop supplying it with weapons, and as some, including Germany, have grown more critical of the war.

At hearings early this month, Nicaragua's ambassador to the Netherlands, Carlos José Argüello Gómez, told the 16-judge panel that "Germany is failing to honour its own obligation to prevent genocide or to ensure respect of international humanitarian law."

Nicaragua also wants Germany to reinstate direct funding to the UN aid agency in Gaza.The head of Germany's legal team, Tania von Uslar-Gleichen, said that Nicaragua's claims "have no basis in fact or law."

Germany has been a staunch supporter of Israel for decades. Berlin, however, has gradually shifted its tone as civilian casualties in Gaza have soared, becoming increasingly critical of the humanitarian situation in Gaza and speaking out against a ground offensive in Rafah. —*AP*

'Israeli army units violated human rights'

The US found five units of the Israeli military responsible for gross violations of human rights in individual incidents, but says they will continue to receive US military backing. Washington is Israel's major military backer, supplying it with $3.8bn worth of weapons and defence systems per year. The announcement is the first determination of its kind for any Israeli unit by the US. The US denies claims it backed down under political pressure by continuing military assistance to the unit despite being unable to say whether or not there had been any accountability in the case. Under America's "Leahy Law", sponsored in 1997 by then-Senator Patrick Leahy, a finding that a foreign military unit committed violations of human rights means it can be cut from receiving US aid.

Protesters take over Columbia's Hamilton

NEW YORK, 30 APRIL

Dozens of protesters took over a building at Columbia University in New York early Tuesday.

They barricaded the entrances and unfurled a Palestinian flag out of a window in the latest escalation of demonstrations against the Israel's assault on Gaza that have spread to college campuses nationwide.

Video footage showed protesters on Columbia's Manhattan campus locking arms in front of Hamilton Hall early Tuesday

PHOTO: X/@KARNEY_GISELLE

and carrying furniture and metal barricades to the building, one of several that was occupied during a 1968 civil rights and anti-Vietnam War protest on the campus.

Posts on an Instagram page for protest organizers shortly after midnight urged people to protect the encampment and join them at Hamilton Hall.

Universities are turning to force and ultimatums that have resulted in clashes with police.

Dozens of people were arrested Monday during protests at universities in Texas, Utah and Virginia, while Columbia and University of Texas said hours before the takeover of Hamilton Hall that it had started suspending students. Officers used pepper spray after a group of protesters.

—*AP*

BLINKEN PRESSES HAMAS TO ACCEPT NEW CEASEFIRE PROPOSAL

CAIRO, 30 APRIL

The United States stepped up pressure on Monday for a ceasefire deal in Gaza as the secretary of state said a new proposal had been put to Hamas, whose officials were in Cairo talking to Egyptian mediators. Israeli airstrikes killed 26 people in Gaza's southernmost town of Rafah. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, ahead of a visit to Israel this week, urged Hamas to accept the latest proposal, calling it "extraordinarily generous" on Israel's part. The terms were not made public. But according to an Egyptian official and Israeli media, Israel has softened its position, lowering the number of hostages it demands that Hamas free during the initial six-week phase of the ceasefire in return for the release of hundreds of Palestinians from Israeli prisons. One question is whether that will be enough to overcome Hamas concerns over the ceasefire's second phase. Hamas has demanded assurances that an eventual release of all hostages will bring a complete end to Israel's nearly seven-month assault in Gaza and a withdrawal of its troops from the devastated territory. Israel has offered only an extended pause, vowing to resume its offensive once it is over.

—*AP*

US pier in Gaza to cost $320M

A US Navy ship and several Army vessels involved in an American-led effort to bring more aid into the besieged Gaza Strip are offshore of the enclave and building out a floating platform for the operation that the Pentagon has said will cost at least USD 320 million. Photos analysed by The Associated Press show the USNS Roy P Benavidez about 11km from the port on shore, where the base of operations for the project is being built by the Israeli military. —*AP*

Colombian army chopper crashes killing 9 soldiers

BOGOTA, 30 APRIL

An army helicopter carrying supplies to troops crashed in a rural area in northern Colombia on Monday, killing nine soldiers on board, the country's armed forces said. The Colombian military said the helicopter was taking the supplies to the municipality of Santa Rosa del Sur, an area that has recently experienced fighting between the National Liberation Army guerrilla group and the drug trafficking group known as the Gulf Clan. The military said the helicopter crash was an accident. The military said the helicopter crashed around 1:50 pm local time. It was an MI-17 Russian-built chopper that is often used to carry troops and supplies. —*PTI*

4 law officers killed, 4 hurt in Carolina shootout

CHARLOTTE, 30 APRIL

Four police officers serving a warrant for a felon wanted for possessing a firearm were killed and four other officers were wounded in a shootout Monday at a North Carolina home, police said. Some of the officers who rushed to the Charlotte neighbourhood to rescue the first wave of downed officers were wounded as a second shooter began firing on them after they killed the wanted man, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Chief Johnny Jennings said. After a three-hour standoff, the suburban Charlotte home was torn open. Armoured vehicles smashed into it, ripping off windows and entire doorways that were left broken. —*PTI*

1st China scientist to reveal Covid sequence 'evicted'

SHANGHAI, 30 APRIL

The first scientist to publish a sequence of the COVID-19 virus in China was staging a sit-in protest after authorities locked him out of his lab. Virologist Zhang Yongzhen wrote in an online post on Monday that he and his team were suddenly notified they were being evicted from their lab, the latest in a series of setbacks, demotions and ousters since he first published the sequence in early January 2020. The move shows how the Chinese government continues to pressure and control scientists, seeking to avoid scrutiny of its handling of the coronavirus outbreak. —*AP*

AFTER KEY MEET

IMF vows to immediately release $1.1bn loan to Pak

WASHINGTON/ ISLAMABAD, 30 APRIL

The IMF has approved an immediate disbursal of the final tranche of USD 1.1 billion to Pakistan as part of a bailout package, emphasising that the cash-strapped country needs to take tough measures to bring its economy back on track.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) Executive Board's decision on Monday came after the global lender completed the second and final review of Pakistan's economic reform programme supported by the IMF's Stand-By Arrangement (SBA).

With this development, the disbursements under the SBA reached around USD 3 billion.

All board members favoured the release of the last instalment. India, however, abstained from voting.

IMF official said Pakistan will receive the loan payment this week.

The development came a day after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif met IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif held a meeting with IMF Chief Kristalina Georgieva in Riyadh **PHOTO: PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE**

In his first meeting with the IMF Chief since his re-election as premier, Sharif also discussed Pakistan's demand for another IMF programme as the country still needs the global lender's crutches to wobble on to get its economy back on track. An IMF team is expected to visit Pakistan in May to initiate talks for a new long-term Extended Fund Facility (EFF) ranging between USD 6 to USD 8 billion with the possibility of augmentation through climate financing. However, the exact size and time frame will only be determined after evolving consensus on the major contours of the next programme in May 2024. —*PTI*

Mexico drags Ecuador to UN court

THE HAGUE, 30 APRIL

Mexico is taking Ecuador to the top UN court on Tuesday, accusing the nation of violating international law by storming the Mexican Embassy in Quito to arrest a former vice president who had just been granted asylum by Mexico.

The 5 April raid, hours after Mexico granted asylum to former vice president Jorge Glas, spiked tensions that had been brewing between the two countries since Glas, a convicted criminal and fugitive, took refuge at the embassy in December.

Leaders across Latin America condemned the raid as a blatant violation of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations.

Ecuador said Glas was wanted on corruption convictions and not for political reasons, and has argued that Mexico granting asylum to a convicted criminal was itself a violation of the Vienna convention.

Two mornings of preliminary hearings at the International Court of Justice are focused on Mexico's request for interim orders known as provisional measures to be put in force while the case progresses through the court — a process likely to take many months. —*AP*

US urges nations to stop supporting Sudan's factions

UNITED NATIONS, 30 APRIL

The United States on Monday implored all countries supplying weapons to Sudan's warring parties to halt arms sales, warning that history in the vast western Darfur region where there was a genocide 20 years ago "is repeating itself".

US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield told reporters after an emergency closed meeting of the UN Security Council that El Fasher, the only capital in Darfur not held by paramilitary forces, is "on the precipice of a large-scale massacre."

She urged all countries to raise the threat that "a crisis of epic proportions is brewing." Britain's deputy ambassador James Kariuki echoed her appeal saying: "The last thing Sudan needs is a further escalation on top of this conflict that's been going on for a whole year."

Thomas-Greenfield said there are "credible reports" that the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces and their allied militias have razed many villages west of El Fasher and are planning "an imminent attack on El Fasher."

"An attack on El Fasher would be a disaster on top of a disaster," Thomas-Greenfield warned, saying it would put the two million people who live in El Fasher and 5,00,000 Sudanese who have sought refuge there at risk.

Thomas-Greenfield urged the paramilitary forces, known as the RSF, to end their siege of El Fasher "and swear off any attack on the city."

She urged the RSF and rival government forces to take urgent steps to de-escalate the violence and engage in direct negotiations, protect civilians and enable humanitarian access, especially to the 5 million Sudanese "on the brink of famine" and 10 million others in desperate need of aid. —*AP*

Fumio Kishida
PHOTO: X/@KISHIDA230

JAPAN'S PM TO NOT QUIT OVER PARTY'S POLL LOSS

TOKYO, 30 APRIL

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said Tuesday his governing party's major defeat in last weekend's by-elections was largely due to a political fundraising scandal and that he would not step down or replace party executives to take responsibility.

Instead, Kishida said he will push anti-corruption measures and political reforms.

Kishida said the scandal dealt "a big and heavy hindrance" to the party. The scandal centres on dozens of lawmakers in Kishida's Liberal Democratic Party who allegedly pocketed profits from ticket sales to political events by falsifying accounting reports.

Kishida denied he would step down or replace top LDP posts, and pledged to pursue party and political reforms, including a revision to the political funds laws. He also vowed to tackle economic issues. The conservative Liberal Democratic Party lost all three seats in Sunday's parliamentary by-elections in Nagasaki, Shimane and Tokyo. Kishida's party only fielded its own candidate in Shimane, a conservative stronghold, while the liberal-leaning main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan clinched all three seats previously held by LDP. —*AP*

READY TO EXPLODE

Indonesia's Mount Ruang volcano erupted on Tuesday for a second time in two weeks, spewing ash almost 2kminto the sky, closing an airport and peppering nearby villages with debris **PHOTO: PTI**

Gunman kills 6 worshippers in Afghanistan mosque

ISLAMABAD, 30 APRIL

A gunman stormed a mosque in western Afghanistan, opening fire and killing six people as they were praying, a Taliban official said Tuesday.

Local media reports and a former president of Afghanistan said the mosque was targeted because it was a place of worship for members of the country's Shiite Muslim minority.

According to Abdul Mateen Qani, a spokesman for the Taliban Interior Ministry, the attack happened on Monday night in Guzara. He said in a post on the social media platform X, formerly Twitter, that an investigation was underway. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attack, which also wounded another worshipper, and the attacker fled the scene. Local media reported that the mosque's imam was among those killed. . —*AP*

No one has claimed responsibility for the attack **PHOTO: X/@LIVETUBEALERTS**

IN CANADA

I'ntl students can now work for only 24 hrs

OTTAWA, 30 APRIL

International students, including those from India, in Canada, will be able to work off-campus for only up to 24 hours per week starting in September, according to a new rule that will come into effect from Tuesday.

The Liberal Party-led government of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau temporarily waived the 20-hour cap on work hours for international students during the COVID-19 pandemic in a bid to ease labour shortages facing the country.

Canada is one of the most sought-after destinations for Indian students. According to a 2022 report of the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE), there were 3,19,130 Indian students in Canada. In both colleges and universities based in Canada, Indians hold the majority of seats among international students.

Most countries that welcome international students set limits on the number of hours they may work **PHOTO: X/@THETRIBUNECHD**

Miller said students who come to Canada must be here to study. As such, allowing students to work up to 24 hours per week will ensure they focus primarily on their studies, while having the option to work, if necessary.

Recent studies conducted in the US and Canada have shown that there is a considerable decline in academic performance for students working more than 28 hours per week, and that working more than 24 hours per week increases the chances that a student will drop out of their programme, the press release underlined.

Most countries that welcome international students set limits on the number of hours they may work while they study. Australia recently changed its policy to allow a student to work 48 hours every 2 weeks. In the US, students must meet additional criteria before being permitted to work off campus at all, the release noted.

In December 2023, the Canadian government raised the cost-of-living threshold that students must meet to be approved for a study permit so they are financially prepared for life in Canada and are not as dependent on working.

—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Rupee recovers 4 paise to 83.41 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 30 APRIL

The rupee recovered 4 paise to 83.41 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday, tracking fresh foreign capital inflows amid volatility in the domestic equity markets. According to forex analysts, the domestic currency initially faced resistance from a strong greenback and upward momentum in the crude oil prices but recovered the lost ground during the session on the back of a sharp rally in equities in the late afternoon trade. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.46 and traded between 83.41 and 83.52 against the greenback during the session. The domestic currency finally settled at 83.41 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a gain of 4 paise from its previous closing level. *—PTI*

KPI Green Energy secures 74.3 MW solar projects

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

KPI Green Energy on Tuesday said it has received new orders to execute solar power projects totalling 74.30 megawatt. Its wholly-owned subsidiaries Sun Drops Energia Private Limited and KPark Sunbeat Private Limited shall develop the projects as per the terms of the order, KPI Green Energy said in an exchange filing. "We are glad to inform that KPI Green has received new orders aggregating to 74.30 MW for executing solar power projects," it said. While KPark Sunbeat Private has undertaken work to develop 30 MW solar capacity, Sun Drops Energia has undertaken 17.3 MW capacity under the 'Captive Power Producer (CPP)' segment of the company. *—PTI*

DGCA suspends Vistara official for training lapses

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

Aviation regulator DGCA has suspended a senior Vistara official for lapses in conversion training of pilots, a source said on Tuesday. Vikram Mohan Dayal, Vice President of Training at the full service carrier, has been removed from his post, the source said. There was no comment from Vistara. Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) had conducted an enquiry into alleged lapses in conversion training of some pilots. A narrow body pilot can operate wide body aircraft. The hat lapses were noticed in the conversion training of little over 10 pilots and after the enquiry, the regulator decided to take action against airline's training head. *—PTI*

Sterlite Power bags projects worth Rs 2,500 cr in Q4

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

Sterlite Power on Tuesday announced securing new orders worth Rs 2,500 crore during the quarter ended 31 March. This takes the company's cumulative order wins in FY24 to Rs 7,000 crore, up 35 per cent year-on-year (YoY) over FY23, Sterlite Power said in a statement. In Q4, some of the projects secured by the company are for conductor supply to green energy power transmission projects. Besides, Sterlite Power has secured multiple orders to supply Extra High Voltage (EHV) & High Voltage (HV) cables for large-scale infrastructure projects that are underway in Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, Karnataka, Odisha, and Gujarat. Sterlite Power is a leading private sector power transmission infrastructure developer and Global Products and Services provider. *—PTI*

Markets wipe out early gains on fag-end sell-off

NSE Nifty dipped 38.55 points or 0.17 per cent to finish at 22,604.85

MUMBAI, 30 APRIL

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty ended lower on Tuesday as a fag-end sell-off wiped out early gains, with IT and power stocks playing spoilsport amid a mixed trend in global markets.

Snapping its two-day winning run, the 30-share BSE Sensex declined 188.50 points or 0.25 per cent to settle at 74,482.78. During the day, it had jumped 440.11 points or 0.58 per cent to 75,111.39.

The NSE Nifty dipped 38.55 points or 0.17 per cent to finish at 22,604.85. In the late afternoon trade, the benchmark hit its all-time peak of 22,783.35, up 139.95 points or 0.61 per cent.

From the Sensex basket, Tech Mahindra, Tata Steel, JSW Steel, HCL Technologies, Tata Consultancy Services, Larsen & Toubro and Kotak Mahindra Bank were the biggest laggards.

Sensex declined 188.50 points to settle at 74,482.78 PHOTO: PTI

Mahindra & Mahindra, Power Grid, Bajaj Finance, IndusInd Bank and Maruti were the major gainers.

Seoul, Tokyo and Hong Kong settled in the positive territory while Shanghai ended lower. European markets were mostly trading lower. Wall Street ended with gains on Monday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.21 per cent to USD 88.59 a barrel.

"Global markets remained mixed ahead of the US FED policy meeting, as markets appear to have already factored in the slim chance of a near-term rate cut. Profit booking ensued towards a close given the sharp rally in the last couple of days and a holiday-led truncated week," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) turned buyers on Monday after continuous offloading. They bought equities worth Rs 169.09 crore, according to exchange data.

In the previous session, the BSE benchmark jumped 941.12 points or 1.28 per cent to settle at 74,671.28 on Monday. The NSE Nifty went up by 223.45 points or 1 per cent to 22,643.40.

Domestic equity markets will remain closed on Wednesday on account of Maharashtra Day. *—PTI*

Global gold demand stays strong, says report

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

Global gold demand was up 3 per cent year-on-year at 1,238 tonne in the first quarter of 2024, marking the strongest first quarter since 2016, according to World Gold Council's Gold Demand Trends report.

The demand for the yellow metal, excluding over-the-counter sales, fell 5 per cent to 1,102 tonne as compared to the same period of 2023.

Healthy investment, persistent buying by central banks, and higher demand from Asian buyers helped drive the gold price to a record quarterly average of USD 2,070 per ounce, 10 per cent higher year-on-year and 5 per cent higher quarter-on-quarter.

On the supply side, mine production increased 4 per cent year-on-year to 893 tonne, a record first quarter. Recycling also reached the highest level since the third quarter of 2020, jumping 12 per cent year-on-year to 351 tonne, as some investors saw the high price.

Gold slumps Rs 150; silver plunges Rs 750

Extending the losses for the second straight session, gold prices on Tuesday slumped Rs 150 to Rs 72,600 per 10 grams in the national capital amid fall in precious metal rates in the global markets, according to HDFC Securities. The yellow metal had closed at Rs 72,750 per 10 grams in the previous session. Silver prices also plunged Rs 750 to Rs 83,750 per kg. In the previous close, it had ended at Rs 84,500 per kg. *—ANI*

PHOTO: X@ANI_DIGITAL

Penalty was imposed for misconduct and lapses PHOTO: FREEPIK

NFRA fines Reliance Home Fin auditors Rs 1.6 crore

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA) has slapped penalties totalling Rs 1.6 crore on an audit firm and two auditors for professional misconduct and auditing lapses in Reliance Home Finance for FY 2018-19.

A fine of Rs 1 crore has been levied on audit firm Dhiraj & Dheeraj, Rs 50 lakh on Piyush Patni and Rs 10 lakh on Pawan Kumar Gupta. Both Patni and Gupta are partners of the Mumbai-based audit firm Dhiraj & Dheeraj.

Besides, the regulator has also barred Patni and Gupta for a period of 5 years and 3 years, respectively, from being appointed as auditors or from undertaking any audit in respect of financial statements or internal audit of any company or body corporate.

Further, PW reported suspected fraud regarding loans amounting to approx Rs 7,900 crore as of 31 March, 2019.

Also, the audit firm accepted the audit engagement without complying with the relevant requirements of the Chartered Accountants Act, 1949.

- Besides, the regulator has also barred Patni and Gupta for a period of 5 years and 3 years, respectively, from being appointed as auditors

The auditor did not ensure an objective engagement quality review by the EQCR Partner, failed to adhere to quality standards, failed to evaluate the going concern basis of accounting, and failed to comply with the requirements of Standards of Auditing (SA) while reporting on the work of management's experts, the order said.

The omissions and commissions of the auditor had rendered the audit report unreliable. The audit firm had issued a qualified report while it was required to issue a disclaimer or adverse opinion, had the audit been conducted as per SAs, it added. *—PTI*

India's oil import bill could swell to USD 104 bn in FY25: ICRA

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

India's net oil import bill could widen to USD 101-104 billion in current fiscal from USD 96.1 billion in 2023-24 and any escalation in the Iran-Israel conflict could impart an upward pressure on the value of imports, ICRA said on Tuesday.

The domestic rating agency said based on its analysis, lower value of Russian oil imports is estimated to have led to savings of USD 7.9 billion in 11 months (April-February) of 2023-24, up from USD 5.1 billion in 2022-23.

Additionally, any escalation in the Iran–Israel conflict and an associated rise in crude oil prices could impart an upward pressure on the value of net oil imports in the current fiscal year, it added.

India is more than 85 per cent dependent on imports for its needs of crude oil, which is converted into fuels such as petrol and diesel at refineries.

Iran-Israel conflict could put pressure on imports PHOTO: PTI

Post the Ukraine war, some Western nations shunned Russian oil, leading to Moscow offering discounts. This led to Indian refiners lapping up the discounted oil. The recent conflict in the Middle East also poses threat to crude oil import route. Earlier this month, Iran first launched drone and rocket attacks on Israel.

India imports oil from Saudi Arabia, Iraq and the UAE as well as liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Qatar through the Strait of Hormuz, which is a narrow sea passage between Oman and Iran. *—PTI*

Microsoft to invest USD 1.7 billion in AI

JAKARTA, 30 APRIL

Microsoft will invest USD 1.7 billion over the next four years in new cloud and artificial intelligence infrastructure in Indonesia — the single largest investment in Microsoft's 29-year history in the country — Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella said Tuesday.

Microsoft runs one of the world's largest cloud computing operations and has taken a significant step into artificial intelligence by incorporating an AI chatbot into its search engine, Bing. Its earnings report Thursday said profit rose 20 per cent for the January-March quarter as it tries to position itself as a leader in applying artificial intelligence technology to make workplaces productive.

PHOTO: PTI

Microsoft sees Southeast Asia as a growing market and potential location for more AI product development. The rise of AI in the region is expected to significantly impact its economic landscape. A study held by Kearney, a global consulting firm, said that AI could contribute nearly USD 1 trillion to Southeast Asia's GDP , of which Indonesia is expected to capture USD 366 billion.

Apple CEO Tim Cook met Widodo on 17 April and said company would "look at" manufacturing in Indonesia. *—PTI*

FOR GST DUES

Patanjali Foods gets showcause notice

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

Patanjali Foods has been served a show cause notice by the GST intelligence department, asking the company to explain why input tax credit worth Rs 27.46 crore should not be recovered from it.

Yoga guru Ramdev-led Patanjali Ayurved Group firm, which is mainly into the edible oil business, has received the notice from the Directorate General of GST Intelligence, Chandigarh Zonal Unit, according to a regulatory filing made by the company on 26 April.

"As of now the authority has only issued a show cause notice and the company will be taking all necessary action to defend its case before the authority," Patanjali Foods said.

Input tax credit of Rs 27.46 not recovered from it PHOTO: X/@INVGURIND

Last week, Patanjali Foods had said it will evaluate a proposal to acquire the non-food business of promoter group Patanjali Ayurved.

In a regulatory filing, Patanjali Foods informed that its board has discussed the initial proposal received from Patanjali Ayurved Ltd for a sale of the latter's non-food business undertaking to the company.

The company operates in edible oils, food and FMCG, and wind power generation segments through a bouquet of brands like Patanjali, Ruchi Gold, Nutrela, etc.

Patanjali Ayurved had acquired Ruchi Soya through the insolvency process and later renamed the company to Patanjali Foods Ltd. *—PTI*

POST INVESTIGATION

Sebi asks NSE to assess Linde India's party transactions

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

Markets regulator Sebi has asked the National Stock Exchange (NSE) to designate a valuer to conduct the valuation of related party transactions between Linde India and Praxair India following complaints by shareholders.

The matter relates to various transactions and agreements by Linde India Ltd (LIL) with its related parties Praxair India Pvt Ltd (PIPL) and Linde South Asia Services Pvt Ltd (LSASPL).

Sebi investigated the case after receiving multiple complaints alleging that transactions and agreements entered by Linde India with Praxair India were in the nature of material related party transactions (RPTs) and Linde India did not obtain shareholders' approvals on these transactions.

In its interim order passed on Monday, Sebi noted that Linde India was executing "related party transactions which prima facie appear to be material, without taking shareholder approval. Such actions effectively deprive public shareholders of an opportunity to express their views on transactions which have the potential to disproportionately benefit controlling shareholders at the expense of the broader shareholder base".

Sebi asked NSE to appoint a registered valuer to carry out a valuation of the business foregone and received, including by way of geographic allocation, in terms of the joint venture and shareholders agreement entered between Linde India and Praxair India that led to the formation of Linde South Asia Services.

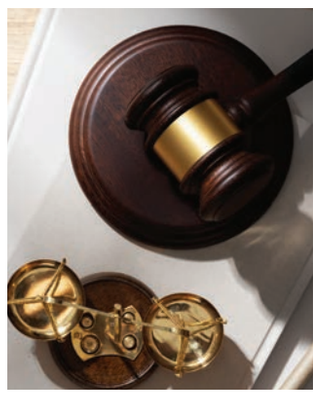


PHOTO: FREEPIK

- The matter relates to various transactions and agreements by Linde India Ltd (LIL) with its related parties Praxair India Pvt Ltd (PIPL) and Linde South Asia Services Pvt Ltd

Linde Plc had two subsidiaries in India - Linde and Praxair India. Subsequently, the two entities - Linde and Praxair India - entered into a joint venture and shareholders agreement, whereby both LIL and PIPL were to hold a 50 per cent stake in Linde South Asia Services, a company engaged in providing administrative and support services to both LIL and PIPL. *—PTI*

US tile industry seeks import tariff on India

Washington, 30 April

A coalition of US ceramic tile suppliers has urged the federal government to impose tariffs on ceramic tile imports from India as it is impacting domestic industry due to subsidised imports by Indian government. Import of ceramics and tiles from India has increased significantly over the past few years, an association of the US ceramic and tiles industry has claimed alleging that these are impacting their domestic industry as the imports are subsidised by the Indian government. US International Trade Commission last week issued a federal notification giving notice of the institution of investigations and commencement of preliminary phase antidumping and countervailing duty investigation to determine whether there is a reasonable indication that the imports of ceramic tile from India impact US industry. 10 June is last date for responses. *—PTI*

Growth in Asia Pacific likely to slow down: IMF

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

Economic growth in the Asia Pacific region is better than previously projected but is expected to slow from 5 per cent in 2023 to 4.5 per cent in 2024, according to IMF's Regional Economic Outlook for Asia and Pacific.

International Monetary Fund said the region remains inherently dynamic and accounts for about 60 per cent of global growth.

The Asia-Pacific region is marked by both resilient growth and rapid disinflation. Disinflation has advanced throughout the region, albeit at different speeds--in some, it remains above target (Australia and New Zealand), in others, it is at or close to central bank targets (emerging markets and Japan), while in some there are deflation risks (China and Thailand).

IMF said Asian central banks should continue to focus firmly on domestic price stability and avoid making policy decisions dependent on anticipated interest rate moves.

It argued that Asian countries are well placed than before to cope with exchange rate movements *—ANI*

PHOTO: AFP

Archer returns, Buttler to lead England in T20 WC

LONDON, 30 APRIL

Fit-again pacer Jofra Archer expectedly returned after a one-year injury-forced hiatus, while rookie all-rounder Tom Hartley also cut the 15-member preliminary T20 World Cup squad announced by defending champions England here on Tuesday.Archer last played for England in a T20 International series against Bangladesh in March last year. The 29-year-old was England's leading wicket-taker in that series with four scalps from three matches at an economy of 6.63. But since then, Archer has been forced to sit on the sidelines because of the recurrence of a stress fracture in his right elbow. "Jofra Archer has recovered from his right elbow injury and is named in the squad."*—PTI*

India to host next year's BWF World Junior C'ships

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

India will host next year's World Junior Badminton Championships at the National Centre of Excellence in Guwahati, the sport's global governing body BWF said on Tuesday. It will be the first time since 2008 that the prestigious Badminton World Federation (BWF) event will be held in India."Both the team and individual events will be held at the Badminton Association of India's (BAI) National Centre of Excellence in the northeast region of the country," the BWF said in a release.India last hosted the event in Pune."India's production line of elite badminton talent is booming, and it is of great significance for the BWF to bring our World Juniors to India for just the second time," BWF President Poul-Erik Høyer said."*—PTI*

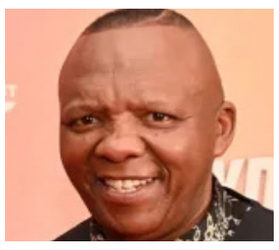


PHOTO: AFP

World champion boxer Dingaan Thobela dies

JOHANNESBURG, 30 APRIL

South African boxer Dingaan Thobela, a two-weight world champion known as "The Rose of Soweto," has died, the Ministry of Sports said on Tuesday. He was 57. Thobela won the WBO lightweight title in 1990 and the WBA lightweight title in 1993, when he beat American Tony Lopez in a rematch. He moved up to super-middleweight and beat Britain's Glenn Catley for the WBC belt with a 12th-round stoppage in 2000, his finest moment. *—PTI*

2nd t2I: India women beat B'desh by 19 runs

DHAKA, 30 APRIL

D Hemalatha's impressive cameo on her comeback to the national side helped India to a 19-run win (DLS method) against at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium in Sylhet in a rain-hit second T20I. Earlier, Radha Yadav led the way for the bowling attack with a three-wicket haul as India restricted Bangladesh to 119 all out. Radha finished with figures of 3/19 while Deepti Sharma and Shreyanka Patil picked up two each. Murshida top-scored with 46 for the hosts.*—AP*

CHAHAL, SAMSON SECURE SPOT

INDIA ANNOUNCE MEN'S T20 WC SQUAD

T20 World Cup begins on 2 June in the US and the West Indies

NEW DELHI, 30 APRIL

Sanju Samson and Yuzvendra Chahal on Tuesday made it to India's provisional squad for the T20 World Cup thanks to strong IPL performances but Shubman Gill and the big-hitting Rinku Singh were relegated to the reserves group as selectors went with the tried and tested for the marquee event in June.

The BCCI announced the Rohit Sharma-led squad after a meeting between secretary Jay Shah and chief selector Ajit Agarkar in Ahmedabad. All-rounder Hardik Pandya was retained as vice-captain despite his poor recent form after taking over Mumbai Indians leadership in the ongoing IPL. It was a toss-up between (Dube and Rinku with Hardik also in the squad," a BCCI source told PTI. Samson, who has had a good IPL both as a batter and captain for Rajasthan Royals, was included as the second wicketkeeper-batter behind Rishabh Pant, pipping the likes of K L Rahul and Ishan Kishan.Leg-spinner Chahal, who last played for India in August 2023, is the second wrist spinner in the team alongside Kuldeep Yadav.

Rohit Sharma, Hardik Pandya, Virat Kohli, Rishabh Pant, Sanju Samson, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shivam Dube, Ravindra Jadeja, Suryakumar Yada, Akshar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Arshdeep Singh, Mohammed Siraj, Jasprit Bumrah, Yuzvendra Chahal, Shubman Gill, Khaleel Ahmed, Avesh Khan and Rinku Singh *PHOTO: PTI*

However, Gill, who is enjoying a good run in the IPL as Gujarat Titans captain, found himself among the standbys along with Kolkata Knight Riders' big-hitter Rinku Singh. The selectors decided to show faith in Yashasvi Jaiswal, who had a slow start in the IPL but regained his touch with swashbuckling hundred recently for Rajasthan Royals. The redoubtable Virat Kohli completed the Indian top order after pulling off strong batting performances in the IPL.The T20 World Cup begins on 2 June in the USA and the Caribbean. India will open their campaign on 5 June in New York.

Indian Squad for T20 World Cup:
Rohit Sharma (Captain), Hardik Pandya (Vice Captain), Yashasvi Jaiswal, Virat Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav, Rishabh Pant (WK), Sanju Samson (WK), Shivam Dube, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Arshdeep Singh, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohd. Siraj. Reserves: Shubman Gill, Rinku Singh, Khaleel Ahmed and Avesh Khan. *—PTI*

UBER CUP

Indian women's team suffered a loss by 5-0 against China in the Group A fixture of the Uber Cup on Tuesday *PHOTO: PTI*

Indian women's team blanked 0-5 by China

CHENGDU, 30 APRIL

Teenage sensation Anmol Kharb left the badminton court in tears owing to an ankle injury as an understrength Indian women's team suffered a 0-5 defeat to the mighty China in its final group A fixture of the Uber Cup here on Tuesday.

Having already qualified for the quarterfinals by picking up successive wins against Canada and Singapore, Ashmita Chaliha sat out the contest against the 15-time champions. The team is competing without double Olympic medallist P V Sindhu, who opted out of the tournament. It was a reality check for the young Indian team as it could not take a single game from the Chinese during the five-match tie.

To add to India's woes, 17-year-old Anmol was forced to retire after twisting her ankle during the second singles contest.

Olympic champion and world no.2 Chen Yu Fei started off the proceedings for China with an easy 21-12 21-10 win over 83rd-ranked Isharani Baruah."A little disappointed in my game because I made too many errors, I thought I would play well with her but it was an easy win for her...the pace was high, I had to increase my speed," Isharani said after her match."Her variations were good, and all her strokes were going in the third court and it wasn't comfortable to hit well. *—PTI*

CSK eye all-round stability against unpredictable PBKS

ASTANA, 30 APRIL

An inconsistent Chennai Super Kings will have to display all-round solidity when they face an unpredictable Punjab Kings in their Indian Premier League match here on Wednesday.

The Super Kings have 10 points from nine matches, similar figures to that of Lucknow Super Giants, Sunrisers Hyderabad, and Delhi Capitals, and the defending champions would certainly like to break away from that mid-table gridlock with a win.

However, the defending champions will be a worried lot as Punjab Kings, who have six points from nine games, are coming to this match after scaling down 262 against Kolkata Knight Riders, the highest chase in the history of T20 cricket.But the Chepauk deck is a different beast, offering a semblance of assistance to the bowlers and it was evident in CSK's impressive 78-run win over SRH in their previous match.

There was no dew in Chennai on that night, and the CSK bowlers defanged SRH's potent batting unit with their accuracy and variations after their batters put on board a 200-plus total.They need an encore against Punjab, and all eyes will be on skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad, who is on a hot streak.

Gaikwad has registered scores of 108 and 98 in his last two innings and New Zealand man Daryl Mitchell too seemed to have regained his touch at just the right time with a 32-ball 52 against Hyderabad.

An inconsistent Chennai Super Kings will have to display all-round solidity when they face an unpredictable Punjab Kings *PHOTO: PTI*

However, the real storm force in the CSK line-up is Shivam Dube, who has pulverized the opposition bowlers while coming as an Impact Sub.While Dube has always been a spin-basher, the left-hander and those numbers don't reflect his experience or skill level. However, CSK in all likelihood will continue to back him.Batting coach Michael Hussey had remarked that the 35-year-old was close to getting a big knock under his belt. *—PTI*

TODAY'S MATCH

CHENNAI SUPER KINGS vs PUNJAB KINGS

Time: 7:30 PM

Where To Watch:

Jio Cinema, Star Sports Network

Stadium: MA Chidamabaram Stadium, Chennai

Fritz downs Hurkacz to reach last 8

MADRID, 30 APRIL

Taylor Fritz defeated Hubert Hurkacz 7-6 (2), 6-4 on Tuesday and will play the winner of the match between Argentinian Francisco Cerundolo, the No 21 seed, and German Alexander Zverev, the No 4 seed, in the next round American Taylor Fritz, the No 12 seed, advanced to the last 8 of the Madrid Masters by winning against Pole Hubert Hurkacz, the No 8 seed, 7-6 (2), 6-4 at the Caja Magica on Tuesday. Fritz, ranked No 13, will play the winner of the match. —PTI

Canada to face Britain or Germany in BJK Cup Finals

LONDON, 30 APRIL

Reigning champions Canada will face either Germany or Britain in their opening match at the Billie Jean King Cup Finals in Spain in November with runners-up Italy against Japan or Romania.

Tuesday's draw for the climax of the women's team event also paired 18-time champions the United States against Slovakia.

Twelve teams qualified for the Finals with the International Tennis Federation (ITF) announcing last week that the format had been changed from groups to a straight knockout.

Four seeded nations -- Canada, Italy, Czech Republic, and Australia -- received byes to the quarter-finals.

Hosts Spain will have to get past Poland with the winners facing the Czechs.

Should Britain beat Germany it could set up a repeat of the 2021 U.S. Open final between Emma Raducanu and Leylah Fernandez, who inspired Canada to the title last year.

Seville's La Cartuja Stadium will host the Finals with the opening round matches from 12 to 14 Nov., followed by the quarter-finals on 15 Nov.*—AP*

Vishvanath, Akash storm into semis

ASTANA, 30 APRIL

Vishvanath Suresh, Akash Gorkha, and Preet Malik advanced to the men's U-22 semi-finals after convincing wins in their respective bouts at the ASBC Asian U-22 and Youth Boxing Championships here on Tuesday.

Reigning youth world champion Vishvanath (48kg) led the charge for India as he beat Iran's Hassani Seyedarsham 5-0 in a one-sided quarterfinal bout. Senior national champion Akash (60kg) outclassed Ebadi Arman of Iran with an identical 5-0 scoreline.

Preet (67kg) also didn't take much time before finishing the bout with a Referee Stopping the Contest (RSC) decision in the first round itself against Vietnam's Nguyen Duc Ngoc.

Kunal (75kg), however, bowed out after losing 0-5 against Iran's Mahshari Mohammad in the quarter-finals. Jugnoo (86kg), Rhythm (+92kg), Tammana (50kg), Preeti (54kg), and Priyanka (60kg) will have their U-22 quarter-final bouts later on Tuesday. The U-22 semi-finals will be played on Saturday.

On Monday night, Rahul Kundu (75kg), Lakshay Rathi (+92kg), Laxmi (50kg), Tamanna (54kg), Yatri Patel (57kg), and Shrusthi Sathe (63kg) emerged victorious to enter the semi-finals in the youth category. *—PTI*

PREMIER LEAGUE

Vardy leads Leicester to Championship title

LONDON, 30 APRIL

Jamie Vardy scored twice as Leicester celebrated their promotion to the Premier League in style on Monday with a 3-0 win at Preston that secured the Championship title. The Foxes' return to the top flight was sealed after Leeds' shock 4-0 capitulation at QPR on Friday.

Enzo Maresca's men needed victory at Deepdale to guarantee beating Ipswich to the top spot with a game to spare and did so with ease, thanks in large part to their 37-year-old captain. Vardy was one of the heroes of Leicester's memorable Premier League triumph in 2016 and part of the side that also lifted the club's first FA Cup just three years ago. He played a central role in another night to savor for the traveling fans as he took his tally for the season to 20 goals.

Jamie Vardy scored twice as Leicester celebrated their promotion to the Premier League in style on Monday with a 3-0 win at Preston that secured the Championship title *PHOTO: X/ @LCFC*

"We knew it was going to be a tough game but we got the job done. Celebrating with the fans is great," said Vardy.

"How could you not love scoring goals? Especially the second one, scoring in front of the fans - you can't get a better feeling than that."

- Jamie Vardy scored twice as Leicester celebrated their promotion to the Premier League in style on Monday with a 3-0 win at Preston that secured the Championship title. The Foxes' return to the top flight was sealed after Leeds' shock 4-0 capitulation at QPR on Friday.

Vardy opened the scoring when his mishit effort found the far corner on 36 minutes before smashing into an unguarded net after Wout Faes' shot came back off the post. Kasey McAteer set the seal on the title party when he headed in Abdul Fatawu's cross 23 minutes from time.

After retaining much of the squad that was surprisingly relegated last season, Leicester desperately needed to return to the riches of the Premier League at the first attempt with the club running up huge losses.

They were charged in March by the Premier League for alleged breaches of profit and sustainability rules (PSR) relating to their last three years in the top flight.

Leicester could start life back in the top flight with a points deduction if found guilty. The battle to join them in the Premier League next season is set to go to the final day of the Championship season on Saturday.

Leeds sit second on goal difference ahead of Ipswich, who have a game in hand away at Coventry on Tuesday. *—AP*